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NATURE

OF

THE ATONEMENT.

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A

DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AUG. 17, 1823, IN THE CHAPEL

OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

ANDOVER.

BY JAMES MURDOCK, D. D.
Brown Professor of Sac. Rhet. and Eccles. Hist. in the Seminary.

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THIS discourse was delivered to an audience composed chiefly of theological students, and was designed to aid them in forming their opinions on the important subject discussed. For their benefit, as well as at their desire and expense, it is now made public. In preparing it for the press, the writer at first intended to have assigned to the appendix a greater portion of the discussion, and to have retained at least all the practical reflections embodied in the original sermon. But he soon found that this course would swell the publication too much, and would cost him more time than could be spared from his other duties. He therefore changed his plan, omitted much that was merely practical and enlarged the discussion in the body of the sermon, and subjoined only a few articles by way of appendix. As it has thus assumed very much the character of a theological tract, some references and quotations have been annexed, which can be of no use to the public at large; but which, it is hoped, will be of value to those for whom they were intended.

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SERMON.

Rom. iii. 25, 26.

"WHOM GOD HATH SET FORTH TO BE A PROPITIATION, THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, TO DECLARE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS THAT ARE PAST, THROUGH THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD; TO DECLARE, I SAY, AT THIS TIME HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS: THAT HE MIGHT BE JUST, AND THE JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHICH BELIEVETH IN JESUS."

THE great question, the question of deepest interest—to us, and to all men,—is, on what conditions will God be propitious to us? In other words, how may we obtain forgiveness of our sins and the everlasting favour of God? What will he accept as an atonement for our transgressions? What can restore that harmony between him and us, which has been interrupted by the apostacy of our first parents and our own criminal deeds, and which must be restored, or we must be forever miserable?—This is a question which presses heavily on the soul of every man, when he looks forward with anxiety to the grave and to the world that lies beyond it. And to answer this question, is the grand problem in the religion of every age and country.—From the nature of the question, it is obvious that *reason* alone

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can never answer it. An offended God will make his own terms: and who can tell what they will be, till he reveals them?*—To give us information on this subject, and information on which we may rely, is the chief object of the christian revelation. As it contains the most satisfactory declarations, and especially as it assures us that God will bestow free pardon and everlasting bliss on all who repent and believe in Jesus Christ; this revelation is justly denominated the Gospel, the glad tidings from heaven. Yet, full and explicit as the scriptures are on this subject, they do not enable us to understand it perfectly. Many questions may be asked which it would be difficult, and some which it would be impossible to answer. Who, for instance, can comprehend the mysterious union of natures in the person of the Mediator? Who can tell all the bearings and influences of his obedience and death? Who can be certain that he knows all the obstacles which were to be removed, before a free pardon could be consistently extended to sinful men? Or who will presume that he understands all the effects of the work of redemption, in the great system of the universe? It is easy to see, that a finite human mind can but imperfectly comprehend the designs and procedure of God in the moral, as well as in the natural world. Still, information sufficient to answer all practical purposes, we may presume, is given us. For the attainment of salvation, it may be sufficient

* See *Brettschneider's* Handbuch der Dogmatik. 2ter Theil. § 158. S. 272 ff. and *M. F. G. Süskind* über die Möglichkeit der Strafen—Aufhebung oder der Sünden—Vergebung, nach Principien der practischen Vernunft, in *Flatt's* Magazin. 1ter Stuck. S. 1—67. Tubing. 1796, and *Butler's* Analogy, Pt. II. chap. 3, 4, 5, particularly chap. 5, pp. 281—287. ed. Boston, 1809.

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that we know and believe firmly the simple fact, that there is forgiveness with God, for the penitent believer, on account of something which Christ has done or suffered. Not much beyond this, have the knowledge and the faith of the great body of christians, in every age, extended. Yet on a subject of so much interest,—a subject into which angels look with eager curiosity, and which is to be the theme of the redeemed to eternity,—more knowledge certainly is desirable. It may contribute to the establishment of our faith, to the correction of our sentiments and the enlargement of our knowledge, on other points in theology; and may afford us interesting subjects for devout meditation. No work of God equally displays the depth of the divine wisdom and goodness; none seems more worthy to engage all the powers of the human mind.—On few points in theology, has the christian church made greater progress in knowledge. From the days of the earliest fathers to Martin Luther, there was a gradual though not very rapid advance. The reformers cast much light on the subject. From that time, the adversaries of the doctrines of grace have, with eagle eyes, detected errors and mistakes in the writings of the reformers and their successors. Within the last fifty years, the subject has undergone a more full discussion than ever; and the advance in knowledge has, I conceive, been answerable to the efforts made. One fact is noticeable, and demands our gratitude to the Author of all light: the believers in gratuitous justification, both in Europe and America, seem to be gradually coming to nearly the same conclusions.*

With a view to exhibit the results, to which my own mind has been led, and especially in regard to the na-

* See Appendix, A.

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ture and the proximate effects of the atonement, I shall now direct your attention to the passage of scripture prefixed to this discourse.

In this text, Paul declares, explicitly, what was the immediate *object* of Christ's atoning sacrifice;—that is, what effect it had in the economy of redemption, or how it laid a proper foundation for the pardon and the salvation of sinful men.—It was the immediate object of this sacrifice, *to declare* the righteousness of God: in other words, to display and vindicate the perfect holiness and uprightness of his character as a moral governor. This display being made, he can with propriety forgive all that believe in Jesus.—As this sentiment is the foundation of my whole discourse, I shall take some pains to shew that it is really contained in the text.

The Apostle is here treating, professedly, on the doctrine of justification by grace through the atonement made by Jesus Christ. And he uses, in the text, no figurative terms, and no comparisons or allusions, which might mislead us. He appears to aim at stating the simple truth, and in the most direct and appropriate terms. The plain, direct meaning of his words, therefore, taking them throughout in their most obvious sense, is their true meaning. Keeping these things in view, let us now enter the sanctuary of this text, and survey the objects it contains.* "God hath *set forth*,"—προεθετο—

* For the sake of those who may wish to see the words of the original in their connexion, the whole text is here given. Verse 25. *Ον προεθετο ὁ θεος ἱλαστηριον δια της πιστεως εν τῳ αυτου αἱματι, εις ενδειξιν της δικαιοσυνης αὐτου, δια την παρεσιν των προγεγονοτων ἁμαρτηματων εν τῃ ανοχῃ του θεου·* verse 26. *προς ενδειξιν της δικαιοσυνης αὐτου εν τῳ νυν καιρῳ, εις το ειναι αυτον δικαιον, και δικαιουντα τον εκ πιστεως Ιησου.*

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hath *exposed* to view, as an object which is brought forth and exhibited to public inspection. "God hath set forth his Son *a propitiation*,"—*ιλαστηριον, a propitiatory sacrifice* or *victim*;—not a *mercy-seat* or covering for the ark, as some have understood it.*—"Through faith in his blood:" that is, the benefits of which sacrifice, men obtain by trusting in it.—God hath done this "*to declare his righteousness.*" This propitiatory sacrifice was intended,—*εις ενδειξιν*, or as afterwards expressed, *προς ενδειξιν*,—for *a display, exhibition* or *manifestation*: and the thing to be displayed or exhibited, was *the righteousness* of God,—*της δικαιοσυνης αυτου*,—that is, the rectitude of his views and proceedings as the moral governor of the universe.†

Some suppose the righteousness of God to denote here, not one of the divine attributes, but that righteousness which God accepts and makes the ground of a sinner's justification; or what had just before been denominated "the righteousness of God without the law," and "the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ."‡—But this would be supposing the righteousness of God to be nothing different from the propitiation itself; between which two things, the text makes the same distinction as between *the means* employed, and

* See *Wolfii* Curae Philol. in loc. *Magee* on Aton. and Sacr. p. 130. Novum Test. Gr. *à Koppe*; and *Rosenmüller* in locum.

† By the words *rectitude* and *righteousness*, here and throughout the discourse, I intend what is called *general* or *mixed justice*; which is to be carefully distinguished from *particular* or *simple justice*. See a full account of the distinction, in the Appendix B.

‡ See *Whitby*, in loc. and Discourse on Imputation, in his Com. on N. T. vol. II. p. 228.

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the effect produced. The propitiation was intended for an exhibition, or, it was an exhibition, of the righteousness of God. That which is employed solely as the means of exhibiting something else which we wish to display, cannot be the very thing displayed. To bear the meaning contended for, the text should read: Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation, that is, *hath caused to become* his righteousness.

Again; some contend that δικαιοσυνη should here be rendered *benignity*, *kindness* or *compassion*. And the word δικαιος, translated *just*, in the next verse, they would have signify *merciful*, *gracious*, *compassionate*.*— That a very few passages are to be found, in which the sense would be preserved, and perhaps be expressed more definitely, by rendering these Greek words in this manner, I will admit. It is no uncommon thing for words of a general import, as these are, to be used occasionally instead of more limited terms. But this occasional usage of words in an improper and peculiar sense, does not prevent them from having what may be called their ordinary and their appropriate meaning; that is, a meaning which is always to be given them, when no reasons appear to forbid it. Precisely such is the case before us. These Greek words, ordinarily and appropriately, express the same ideas as our English words *righteousness* and *righteous;* and no philological reason forbids their having this meaning here. Those who contend for rendering them compassion and compassionate, offer no reasons drawn from the connexion, the

* See *Hammond*, *Rosenmüller* and *Koppe*, in loc. and *Schleusneri* Lex: N. T. *Ενδειξις*, no. 1. and *Δικαιος*, no. 4.

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course of thought, or parallel passages. They merely adduce proof that there are a few passages, in which the words seem to have these peculiar meanings; and then add, that they would give a sense more agreeable to them, if so rendered here. Such arguments need no confutation.—But I have other reasons for rejecting this interpretation. Is it reasonable to suppose the Son of God became incarnate, and suffered and died on the cross, merely to evince that God is a being of compassion?—Was there no other way, in which our heavenly father could convince us that he is kind and gracious? Besides, of what use could it be, for him to demonstrate this attribute in such a way, when he was about to give us proof much more unequivocal by the actual offer of pardon for all our sins and everlasting blessedness? There could certainly be no atoning efficacy in the exhibition of this attribute. It could remove no obstacle to mercy, nor lay any proper foundation for the offer of pardon to the penitent. Yet the text supposes the display of the attribute intended by the Apostle, actually to remove some obstacles; and to enable God to be at the same time what that attribute implies, and the justifier of believers. For he made a display of that attribute, (*εις το ειναι αυτον*) *in order that he might be*, both *δικαιος* and *the justifier* of men.*—And this is implied also in the

* Overlooking the force of *εις το ειναι αυτον*, and supposing the text not to point our attention to that in the mediation of Christ which constitutes its value and efficiency, but merely to state the general facts, that salvation is to us altogether gratuitous, and that it comes to us through the atonement of Christ; some believers in the efficiency of the atonement, have reasoned thus: as it was the mercy of God which led him to seek our salvation, and as salvation is to us a free gift, it accords

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word propitiation. God set forth his Son to be a propitiatory offering for the manifestation of this attribute, so that he could afterwards justify believers. Now is a propitiatory offering, one which is presented to God, to prove him already inclined to mercy, or to make him so? Is it the token and pledge of forgiveness, or the cause and ground of it? If, with some modern writers, we could believe that the atonement made by Jesus Christ, is, not the meritorious ground of justification, but merely a tragic scene, intended to affect us and bring us to repentance, and if we could discover the necessity and the propriety of so strange a procedure; then, indeed, we might suppose God to have set forth his Son as a kind of propitiatory offering to men;—and for the purpose of shewing his compassion for them. One insuperable difficulty, however, would yet remain; which is, that it was to enable God to have mercy on *believers*, not on others, that an atonement was necessary.—But suppose all these difficulties to be surmounted, there is still another objection of a more philological character, arising from the copulative conjunction in the expression, "*just and the justifier*," *δικαιον και δικαιουντα*. Justification, it must be admitted, is of grace. Now by retaining the common translation of *δικαιος*, we have this lucid

with the scope of the passage to render *δικαιοσυνη benignity*. —The answer is, that salvation by Jesus Christ does not originate from simple mercy on the part of God; but from mercy combined with a proper regard to the interests of the universe.—It is therefore not mere *mercy*, but *righteousness*, or what is called general justice, that is displayed in this scheme of salvation. And as the display of this attribute is that which gives to the atonement its value or efficacy; it is subversive of the whole meaning of the passage to render the word *δικαιοσυνη benignity*.

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meaning of the clause, that he might be just, *and* at the same time, be merciful. But, translate *δικαιος merciful*, and what will be the sense?—that he might be merciful, *and* at the same time be merciful! And this senseless tautology, will be rendered still more insufferable if we suppose *δικαιοσυνη*, likewise, to signify *compassion*.

Having now shewn, I would hope satisfactorily, the import of the principal words of the text, I would call your attention to the general scope and connexion of the whole. You will recollect that this epistle was written within thirty years of the crucifixion; and that through all the preceding ages, God had shewn kindness towards such as trusted in his mercy. During four thousand years, he had, in the face of all his intelligent creatures, suspended the execution of justice. Numerous penitent sinners he had received to his bosom, and elevated to mansions above; while, during this long period, no atonement had been made, and no satisfactory ground appeared, to justify a procedure so contrary to the principles of distributive justice and to his own solemn declarations in the law. At length the Saviour had appeared, the atonement was made,—and light now beamed on the hitherto mysterious conduct of the righteous God.—Of this Saviour the text says: Him hath God set forth, as a propitiatory sacrifice, through faith in his blood, for an exhibition of his own righteousness, in regard to the remission of sins committed in the past ages, through the merciful forbearance of God. This propitiatory sacrifice was, I say, intended for an exhibition, in this age of the world, of his own righteousness; so that he might be, and might now be seen to be, a righteous

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moral governor, and at the same time be the justifier of all that believe in Jesus Christ.*

I will now turn from a discussion of the text, to a discussion of the subject itself.—Why was an atonement necessary? What were the objects to be accomplished by it? And how did the mediation of Christ effect these objects? These are the principal questions to be answered. I shall, however, begin with another :—what are the reasons which either induce or require God to inflict any punishment whatever on transgressors? To this I answer :

In the first place, there is a real difference between right actions and wrong ones, between virtue and vice, or sin and holiness. The former are lovely, and meritorious; the latter are unlovely, and of ill-desert. Every being who has a conscience, feels that there is this difference. No man holds all actions to be equally praiseworthy : and no being, whose moral sensibility is acute, can fail to make a broad distinction, in point of merit, between that person who performs all his duties to himself, to his fellow creatures and to his God, and the person who is destitute of every virtue, and abandoned to every species of vice and crime. Now this distinction,

* Instead of giving a list of the numerous commentators and others who construe this text substantially in the manner here exhibited, I will refer only to such of them as confirm or illustrate their interpretation by important remarks. *Grotius*, Defensio Fidei Cath. in Opp. tom. III. p. 303. *G. C. Storr*, Opuscula Academ. Vol. II. p. 190, and Ueber den Zweck des Todes Jesu, subjoined to his Brief an die Hebräer, S. 553 ff. *Döderlein*, Instit. Theol. Christ. II. p. 448. *Veysie's* Bampton Lectures, p. 218 f. *Nares*, Remarks on the Version of N. T. pp. 154—162. *Magee*, on Aton. and Sacr. pp. 127, 261—263. Connect. Ev. Mag. for 1805, vol. VII. p. 161 f. *Burge*, Essay on Aton. pp. 29, 30.

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which even we can see and feel in some degree, the holy God must be supposed to see and feel far more strongly than we do. If then, we look upon some deeds with abhorrence, and on the perpetrators of them with indignation; while certain other actions we admire, and esteem and honour those who perform them; much more, must we suppose the infinite and holy God to have such feelings. From his very nature, therefore, or from his perfect purity and intelligence, we suppose him inclined to make a wide difference between the virtuous and the vicious, between those who do such things as please him, and those who do such things as he abhors. This, doubtless, is one reason why he rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked.

A second reason why God should do this, is, that the good order and the happiness of his kingdom require it. The righteous obey, and the wicked transgress, those laws which his wisdom and goodness have ordained. On the observance of these laws, the order and the happiness of his vast kingdom, and of every part of it, depend. And hence, as the moral governor of the intelligent universe, as the being to whom it belongs to guard the interests of this vast community,—not by physical force, which would destroy the freedom of action, but by motives suited to affect the minds of rational and moral beings,—he must, necessarily, make a distinction between the righteous and the wicked; that is, he must reward the one and punish the other. He would not otherwise do right: he would not distribute justice; nor manifest a due regard to the interests of his great kingdom. He would not administer the government of it in a manner worthy of himself: his char-

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acter, as a wise and righteous ruler, would be impeachable.—"That be far from thee,"—said Abraham, interceding for guilty Sodom,—"that be far from thee, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

The only other ground of punishment, which need be mentioned, is, thirdly, the personal benefit of the individuals who transgress. Some divine punishments, particularly those inflicted in this life, we may suppose to be fatherly chastisements, intended to reclaim the wandering, and thus promote their own best interests. Love or kindness to the individuals themselves, is the ground of these punishments.*

Such we may believe to be the principal reasons, why God punishes the wicked.—And which of them, except perhaps the last, can any man suppose so holy and unchangeable a being as God is, will ever cease to regard? Will the principles of his very nature ever be so changed, that he can cease to feel abhorrence of sin, and esteem for virtue? Or, will he ever become regardless of the duties of his station, as the universal governor, and cease to care for the order and happiness of his kingdom? Till he can do all this, he cannot cordially receive impenitent transgressors to his bosom, and treat them with that kindness which he shews to the righteous.

Of the three grounds of punishment just enumerated, the first is, in the nature of things, removeable in no other way than by a change of character either in God or

* See a lucid statement of the grounds of divine punishments, in *Brettschneider's* Handbuch der Dogm. B. I. S. 354 ff.

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in the sinning creature. Nothing that a Mediator could do would remove it. The holy and unchangeable God can never cease to abhor sin. He must forever feel differently, and be inclined to conduct differently, towards the righteous and the wicked. Nothing can ever bring the infinite mind, which is purity itself, into harmony with the polluted souls of sinning creatures. They must become holy; this, and this only, can remove the first ground of punishment.—And this certainly will remove it; because when creatures cease to be sinners, they must cease to be odious in the sight of God. Their new and holy characters render them now lovely in his view; and he can therefore feel no repugnance, so far as their present characters are concerned, to embracing them as his dear children.—Such a change in the sinner's character, will likewise remove the third ground of punishment, which was the reformation of the sinner himself. Because this object is already obtained, by the change supposed.

Only the second ground of punishment then remains to be removed; and to remove this, and this only, is the proper business of an atonement. This is an obstacle to his forgiveness, which the sinner himself can never remove. He has committed deeds which cannot be recalled. He is a transgressor of the law, and must forever stand guilty. What is done, can never be undone. All he can do, will be to repent of the past, and cease to do evil in future. His repentance, though certainly proper, cannot change the nature of his past transgressions, nor repair the injury they have occasioned. And no future obedience can be more than his immediate duty for the time being; it can never atone or make

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amends for past disobedience. He has violated the law of God; and nothing he can do or suffer, will obliterate his crime, or prevent its mischief to the kingdom of God. The good of the universe requires, that the majesty of the law be maintained inviolate; and this is impossible, let him do what he will, without the full execution of the penalty of the law upon him.

But, it may be said; do not all civil governments grant absolute pardons to the guilty? Why then, may not the divine government do the same? The answer is, because God's government is perfect; but all civil governments are imperfect. They are weak, and can but partially obtain their end. They sometimes give impunity to an accomplice in a crime, if he will bear testimony against his associates; because human governments often have no other sufficient means of detecting the guilty. They pardon a condemned criminal, because the judge erred in condemning him; or because the rigorous execution of the law would, in his case, exceed the demerits of his crime; or because the loss of such a citizen to the state, would be a greater evil to the community, than the suspension of the arm of justice. Such as these are the grounds, on which pardons in civil governments can be justified. They all originate from the imperfection of human laws, and from the incompetency of human beings to execute justice. But no such causes can exist in the perfect government of the omniscient God. He therefore, never grants absolute pardons. And in human governments, they tend so much to weaken the force of law and encourage transgression, that every wise lawgiver endeavours to render them as few and rare as possible.

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Again; it may be said, parents and guardians, or heads of families and of schools, frequently remit punishment, when transgressors repent and reform. Why then, may not the great parent of all, do the same? The answer is, that the primary object of these family governments is the personal good of the individuals; and in such little communities, established chiefly for the benefit of the several members, the personal interest or advantage of each bears a higher proportion to the common good of the whole, than in a great empire. Hence, in these little societies, it is comparatively of less importance to support the honour and majesty of law at the expense of individual good. Yet, even here, some regard must be paid to the public good; and of course, to the claims of law. And in proportion to the extent of a community, or the number of subjects under the same government, must be the importance of fixed laws, and of an undeviating adherence to them. There is a difference even between a small family and a large one, and between a small school and a large one. The instructer of a single pupil, may pardon him, whenever it will not be injurious to the pupil himself; but if he has several pupils, it is far otherwise.—Hence it appears, that the principles and maxims of paternal governments are not to be transferred to the government of nations, and much less to that of worlds. But, has it not been already admitted, that God sometimes chastises his creatures, for their good? And does not this shew, that he adopts and acts upon, the principles of paternal governments?—Doubtless; to a certain extent he does. But how far?—is the question. The reasoning just advanced, goes to shew,—not that the personal advantage

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of an individual is never regarded by the divine government,—but, that it bears a very small proportion to the public interests of God's immense kingdom; and therefore must often, very often, be sacrificed. It must never interfere with the greater good of the whole. According to the views heretofore given, so far as God punishes his creatures merely for the purpose of reforming them, he can and he does cease to punish when they are reclaimed. But so far as he punishes for the purpose of establishing and maintaining public law and public justice, individual advantage must give place to public good. Now the latter, rather than the former, must from the nature of the case, or from the extent of his empire and the immense importance of stable law and order in it, be the principal ground of punishment under the divine government. Indeed, all those retributions, which are to follow the general judgment, seem to belong to this class of punishments. At least, we have no evidence, that the fatherly chastisements of God ever extend beyond the state of trial, or the present life.

Thus far we have been examining and attempting to ascertain, precisely, the nature of the difficulty which it was the business of the atonement to remove. The difficulty, it appears, consisted wholly in the second ground of punishment; that is, in the necessity of distributive justice to the wellbeing of the universe.

To remove this difficulty, or to enable God righteously to pardon the repenting sinner; the atonement must give the same support to law, or must display as impressively the perfect holiness and justice of God, as the execution of the law on transgressors would. It must be something different from the execution of the law itself;

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because it is to be a substitute for it, something which will render it safe and proper to suspend the regular course of distributive justice.—If such an expedient can be found, then an adequate atonement is possible; otherwise it is not.*

Now such an expedient, the text represents the sacrifice of Christ to be. It is "a declaration of the righteousness of God; so that he might be just,"—might secure the objects of distributive justice, as it becomes a righteous moral governor to do;—"and yet might justify," or acquit and exempt from punishment, him that believeth in Jesus. It was in the nature of it, an exhibition or proof—ενδειξις—of the righteousness of God. It did not consist in an execution of the law on any being whatever; for it was a substitute for an execution of it.—It did not annihilate the guilt of transgressors, or cause them to be either really or apparently innocent; for this was impossible: it rather proclaimed the atrocity of their guilt.—It did not fulfil the law, or satisfy its demands on transgressors; for then their acquittal would have been an act of justice, not of grace; and the atonement would have been but another mode of executing the law itself, not a substitute for it. Its immediate influence was not on the characters and relations of men as transgressors, nor on the claims of the law upon them. Its di-

* See *F. G. Süskind*, über die Möglichkeit der Straffen-Aufhebung oder der Sünden-Vergebung, in *Flatt's* Mag. für christ. Dogm. St. I. S. 1—68. and *C. G. Brettschneider's* Handbuch der Dogm. §. 158. Band II. S. 248—278. Also *Dr. J. Edwards*, Three Serm. in Selectt. on Atonement, pp. 330—337. *Dr. Maxcy's* discourse, ibid. pp. 206—208. *Dr. Smalley's* Sermon, ibid. pp. 112—114. *Dr. Griffin*, on the Extent of the Atonement, pp. 22—27. *Mr. Burge*, Essay on the script. doctr. of Atonement, pp. 39—66.

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rect operation was on the feelings and the apprehensions of the beings at large, who are under the moral government of God. In two respects, it coincided precisely with a public execution of the law itself: its immediate influence was on the same persons; and that influence was produced in the same way,—by means of a public exhibition. For what is a public execution of the law on culprits, but a public exhibition? and an exhibition, which is intended to affect the feelings and the apprehensions of the community,—to impress them all with high respect and reverence for the law, that stern guardian of the public weal? The atonement to be a proper substitute for the execution of the law, ought to be a public exhibition; and such an exhibition, as would impress all the creatures of God with a deep and awful sense of the majesty and sanctity of his law, of the criminality of disobedience to it, and of the holy unbending rectitude of God as a moral governor.

And such, according to the text, the atonement really was. It was an exhibition or manifestation of the righteousness of God; and an exhibition of such a nature, as must strike every intelligent beholder with astonishment. It was a transaction, without a parallel in the history of the divine government. The son of God, the Lord of glory, himself descended to this lower world. He veiled his godhead in a human body, and humbled himself to dwell with men. He toiled and bore reproach, and suffered from pain and weariness and hunger. He condescended to instruct men, to be their physician, their friend, their very servant;—he washed his disciples' feet. He was obedient to every ordinance of God and man;—he fulfilled all righteousness. He suffered

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himself to be reviled and persecuted, to be arraigned, condemned and crucified. He expired amidst the mockery of Jews, and the insults of a Roman soldiery.—That this was an astonishing exhibition, an exhibition calculated to fill the mind with wonder and amazement; every one feels instantly.—The only difficulty is to understand how this exhibition was a display of the righteousness of God. To solve it, some have resorted to the supposition that the Son of God became our *sponsor*, and satisfied the demands of the law on us, by suffering in our stead. But to this hypothesis there are strong objections. To suppose that Christ was really and truly *our sponsor*, and that he suffered in this character; would involve such a transfer of legal obligations and liabilities and merits, as is inadmissible: and to suppose any thing short of this, will not explain the difficulty. For if, while we call him a sponsor, we deny that he was legally holden or responsible for us, and liable in equity to suffer in our stead; we assign no intelligible reason, why his sufferings should avail any thing for our benefit, or display at all the righteousness of God.—Besides, this hypothesis,—like all the others, which suppose the Son of God to have first entered into a close, legal connexion with sinful men, and afterwards to have redeemed them,—would make the atonement to be a legal satisfaction for sin; and then the acquittal of the sinner would be no pardon at all, but would follow in the regular course of law.—We must, therefore, resort to some other solution. And what is more simple, and at the same time satisfactory, than that which is suggested by the text? The atonement was an *exhibition* or *display*. That is, it was a *symbolical transaction*. It was a transaction, in

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which God and his Son were the actors; and they acted in perfect harmony, though performing different parts in the august drama. The Son in particular, passed voluntarily through various scenes of humiliation and sorrow and suffering; while the Father looked on with all that tenderness and deep concern, which he—and none but he—could feel. The object of both, in this affecting tragedy, was to make an impression on the minds of rational beings every where, and to the end of time. And the impression to be made, was, that God is a holy and righteous God; that while inclined to mercy, he cannot forget the demands of justice, and the danger to his kingdom from the pardon of the guilty; that he must shew his feelings on this subject; and shew them so clearly and fully, that all his rational creatures shall feel that he honours his law while suspending its operation, as much as he would by the execution of it.

But how, it may be asked, are these things expressed or represented by this transaction. The answer is, —symbolically. The Son of God came down to our world, to do and to suffer what he did; not merely for the sake of doing those acts and enduring those sorrows, but for the sake of the impression to be made on the minds of all beholders, by his labouring and suffering in this manner. In this sense, it was a symbolical transaction. And the import or meaning of it, as of every other symbol, is to be learned either from the circumstances and occasion of it, or from the explanation that accompanies it. Hence all that either reason or revelation teaches, respecting the object of Christ's visit to our world, may properly be applied to the explanation

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of this significant transaction.—Does any object, that viewed in this light, it is an obscure and unnatural symbol? I might ask the objector to shew the natural fitness of other symbols both human and divine, to express the import which is ascribed to them. Words, for instance, are symbols of human thoughts and emotions. But what is there in the nature of articulate sounds, to make them significant of the thoughts and emotions of the soul? or to make each word significant of one particular thought, rather than another? The only answer here, is that men have agreed to use certain sounds as symbols of certain thoughts; and thence it is, they have acquired a meaning. In the same way, the common symbolical actions acquire a definite meaning. Why does inclining the body forward express respect? or falling on the knees betoken supplication? These actions would not have such definite meanings, if men had not agreed to use them for such purposes. Yet who does not now, understand and feel their import? Take an example. A child commits a fault; and is required, in token of his repentance, to fall upon his knees and ask forgiveness. He does so; and the parent is satisfied; and all the family sympathize with the offender, and feel that he may now properly be forgiven.—But these, it may be said, are well known symbols. True; yet all their significancy, or at least their definite import, originates from the arbitrary pleasure of those who introduced them and gave them currency. And in the numerous symbols of divine appointment, there was the same indefiniteness of meaning, the same natural unfitness to convey precise notions to the mind, till God by a sovereign act declared what meaning

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should be assigned them. This is true of the covenant of the rainbow, of sacrifices, circumcision, baptism, the Lord's supper,—indeed, of nearly all religious rites under both the old dispensation and the new.—Now if men regulate a great part of their intercourse, and convey to each other most of their thoughts and feelings and determinations, by arbitrary symbols; and if God has appointed various standing symbols, of the same character, to denote his pleasure or purposes, and to be expressive of the most solemn devotions of his creatures; may he not employ an extraordinary symbol, of like character, for the special purpose of shewing with what feelings and views he offers pardon to the penitent? Suppose we could discern no natural fitness in this symbol to convey to us any definite impressions; is not this true of most symbols?—But I venture to say, this symbol has a natural fitness for its object. Its primary object was not so much to enlighten the understanding, as to impress the feelings of creatures. A mere revelation, written or oral, might have been sufficient, if the former of these had been the object. Again, the feelings of creatures were to be impressed by an exhibition, not of the intellectual conceptions of the divine mind, but of the determinate purposes and the holy feelings of God. And, the impression to be made, was to be universal, and deep and lasting as eternity. Now the symbol chosen, was certainly calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on the minds of creatures. This all must admit. It was also of such a nature, as to exhibit uncommon strength of feeling and very great decision of mind, in regard to something, on the part of God the Father and his Son. Never did they perform

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an act indicative of so intense desire and purpose, or one that seemed to involve so much selfdenial, so much painful effort. This symbol then, had all that is necessary in any symbol of emotion or purpose, to give it fitness for its object. As soon as the import of it is made known, it produces, and actually has produced, the effect designed. For the preaching of the cross, the mere statement of what Christ has done and suffered for the salvation of men, has impressed and converted all the nations which have been favoured with it. And the truly pious in all ages of the church, though differing greatly in their conceptions of the nature and operations of Christ's sacrifice, have united in admiring the wisdom of this plan of redemption. They have felt that it displayed,—though unable perhaps to tell how,—the righteousness as well as the goodness of God. It has actually led them to new and adoring views of the divine Being; and has caused them to feel, that this way of salvation exhibited to them the most constraining motives to forsake iniquity and return to the love and service of their Maker.

From this view of the nature of the atonement, arise several reflections of no small importance.

1. The efficiency, and of course the value, of the atonement made by Jesus Christ, is proportionate to the dignity of his character.—For his toils and sufferings were an exhibition, the object of which was to make a deep and lasting impression on the intelligent universe. They were intended to shew how solicitous God is to prevent his creatures from supposing him to make light of transgression, because he lets it go unpunished. Now the strength of the impression made by the exhibition,

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is of vast importance; for it is the visible measure of the divine displeasure at sin. If the whole exhibition makes no deep and lasting impression, if it is viewed as an ordinary and trivial occurrence; it will be inefficient and useless, or perhaps worse than useless. It is only by being such an exhibition as will strike every beholder with astonishment and awe, such as will make an impression too deep ever to be forgotten, that it can answer effectually the ends of an atonement.—If now, we should suppose the Mediator to have been a mere man, an eminent prophet, perhaps;' and that he endured and performed what the gospel relates;—what was there here, more than has often occurred? Is it a strange thing in our world, for good men to be persecuted and put to death? Were not many prophets and righteous men so treated by the ancient Jews? If then God has selected one of these common occurrences, and appointed it to be the special symbol of his concern for the honour of his law; what is gained by the symbol, that would not be gained, without it, by a mere declaration? Will this effectually secure reverence for his law, and impress transgressors with an awful sense of the holiness of God? Will it not rather encourage transgression, by seeming to prove that sin is quite a venial thing in God's account?—Let us next suppose, as some have supposed, that the Mediator was the highest and noblest created or derived being in the universe; but still, a creature, and therefore infinitely beneath the rank of God himself. Such an exalted being, we must suppose, would be very dear to God. Of course, for God to give him up to be reviled and spit upon and crucified, must shew that he regards the occasion which makes it necessary,

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to be a very serious and important one. Because, for such a being to be given up to so great indignity and suffering, would be an extraordinary thing; and would betoken something of unusual occurrence in divine providence. But, as the sufferings of this exalted creature were temporary, and as he was raised to greater honours afterwards; he experienced perhaps no real loss. Viewed in itself, the transaction might be regarded as only one of the more uncommon of those mysterious events which occur in the providence of God. And when the object of it should be made known, the natural inference would be, that God felt it to be somewhat dangerous to suspend the course of justice towards transgressors, and was willing to take some pains to prevent the consequences. But still, if the honour of his law and the good order and happiness of his kingdom, when weighed in his balance, are equivalent only to such sufferings of such a creature; they are in his account but of limited value: and it is by no means certain, that he may not be induced by some consideration, and that not of infinite value neither, to sacrifice them altogether. Thus, such an atonement would fall short of declaring and evincing, fully, "the righteousness of God." It would not enable him to "be just," just to himself and to his kingdom, and yet to "justify the believer." Such an exhibition would fall far, very far, short of making as deep and lasting an impression on the inhabitants of both worlds, as would be produced by the execution of the sentence of the law upon transgressors. It would therefore be an inadequate atonement.—But, let us suppose now, that the Mediator was in dignity and power on a level with God the Father, and in an equal degree

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possessed of all divine attributes; and that he condescended to unite himself with a mortal man; and in this state submitted to be reviled, and loaded with insults, and persecuted even unto death; and we have an exhibition, at which the universe may justly stand amazed. It is needless to object, that it was only the human nature of the complex person, which suffered pain and death. It was so. But what could the infinite and impassible God do more? He became personally united to an abused, suffering mortal, and thus bore a load of indignity heaped upon himself. The human mind can conceive of no exhibition calculated to produce a deeper impression. Of course, this appears to be the most efficacious atonement, the best substitute for the execution of the law, which it was possible for infinite wisdom to devise.

2. According to the view we have taken of the nature and design of the atonement, the justification of believers is not a justification founded on the principles of law and distributive justice. It is an *absolute pardon*, an act of *mere grace;* and of grace on the part of God the Father, as well as on that of God the Son. For the operation of Christ's sacrifice, it appears, was not on the regular course of distributive justice in regard to individual transgressors. Its influence was on the public feeling respecting the character of God. And it only enabled God, with honour to himself and safety to his kingdom, to gratify the desires of his heart by the pardon of repenting sinners. Justification, therefore, is a real departure from the regular course of justice; and such a departure from it, as leaves the claims of the law on the persons justified, forever unsatisfied. This is a legitimate inference from the principles which have

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been advanced. And it is confirmed by the following considerations.

If the atonement causes transgressors to be justified on the principles of law and distributive justice, either it must change the principles of the law itself, or it must divest the transgressor of guilt and ill desert, or it must legally and fully satisfy the demands of the violated law upon him.—But the first is impossible. The law of God is founded on the eternal and immutable principles of distributive justice. It renders to every man according to his deserts. Till the distinction between right and wrong shall cease to exist, or the Omniscient cease to discern it and regard it; the principles of the divine law must remain unaltered. The atonement then did not change the law.—Neither did it divest the transgressor of his guilt and ill desert. It could neither recall the deeds he had committed, nor change their moral character, nor separate from him the guilt of them. It therefore could not make the transgressor to become really innocent. Nor did it "cover over" his sins, or conceal them and cause them to be overlooked and forgotten. For, the pardoned sinner not only remains, in fact, the same guilty creature he was before; but he is viewed and treated by his Maker, as personally guilty; and he must feel himself to be so, and ingenuously confess and mourn over his transgressions, in order to obtain forgiveness; and if received to mercy, he must forever adore and praise the abounding grace of God in his salvation. The atonement then, did not divest the transgressor of his guilt or ill desert.

Neither did it satisfy the demands of the violated law

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upon him. For, what were the demands of the violated law? Not, that some transferable good should be surrendered and paid over to God or to the law, as being forfeited by the transgressor. The law did not ordain, that, in case we sinned, certain privileges or valuable possessions held by us, should be forfeited into the hands of another or to the public, who might sue for them and recover them. Had this been the case, the Mediator might, perhaps, have been able to pay the forfeiture, or something equivalent to it; and thus have virtually satisfied the law. But the law ordained no such thing. When transgressed, it requires no payment, no transfer of any thing whatever, to another. What then does it demand? That the sinner *himself* suffer the punishment, which it denounces. The violated law holds *him* personally guilty, and it requires that due punishment fall on *his* head, and on his only. For the law of God, as already observed, is founded on the principles of distributive justice, which renders to every one according to his deserts. It therefore, carefully discriminates between the innocent and the guilty; and it never suffers the distinction to be overlooked or forgotten. When once a creature becomes a transgressor of its commands or prohibitions, it never is satisfied, and never can be, with any thing short of the full execution of the threatened penalty on the transgressor himself.—And the same is true of criminal law in human governments. No judge can admit an innocent person to suffer an infamous or capital punishment, in place of the person found guilty. If a few rare instances of such a procedure can be gleaned from ancient history, they must be ascribed to the ignorance of the times: for

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neither distributive justice nor the sound maxims of criminal law will vindicate them. Thus Zaleucus, the Locrian lawgiver, is said to have made a law that every adulterer should suffer the loss of both his eyes. Afterwards, his own son being found guilty, the story is, that the father caused one of his own eyes to be plucked out, and then one of his son's eyes. This was an expedient, which might serve very well to shew how much he revered the law, and his fear of lessening its authority. But it was not an execution of the law. The father's loss of an eye was not what the law demanded, nor any part of it. As a judge, Zaleucus could not legally decree it; nor would distributive justice tolerate it. A true description of this transaction would be, that the penalty of the law was in part remitted, through the clemency of the lawgiver, who voluntarily submitted himself to a great calamity, with the hope that it would cause the law to be respected, as much as the full execution of it.* And thus also the bloody sacrifice of the Mediator, was not what the law of God demanded, or could accept, as a legal satisfaction for our sins. All that it could do, was, to display the feelings of God in regard to his law; and to secure, by the impression it made, the public objects which would be gained by an execution of the law. It did not cancel any of the claims of the law on us. And hence, after the atonement was made, God was under no legal obligations to exempt any man from punishment. If he had never

* See *Valerius Maximus*, Exemp. Mem. L. vi. c. v. p. 557. ed. *Thysii*, 1655, whose reflection is: Ita debitum supplicii modum legi reddidit, æquitatis admirabili temperamento, se inter misericordem patrem et justum legislatorem partitus.

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pardoned a single transgressor, neither the law nor distributive justice would have been contravened. And if he pardons at all, it is mere grace. Or to state it otherwise, the atonement was not of such a nature as to require God to pardon us, but it enables him to do it with credit to himself and safety to his kingdom.*

3. From this view of the atonement, it appears that there is no foundation for those controversies which have been raised, respecting the *extent* of the atonement. It has been debated whether Christ made atonement for the elect only, or for all men: and, whether his sacrifice procures for believers forgiveness merely, or all the other blessings likewise that are conferred upon them. These controversies arise from the supposition, that the atonement draws after it, by necessary consequence, the salvation or at least the pardon of all that believe. And they have given no little trouble to those who hold the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, whether by the imputation of guilt or the transfer of punishment. On such a supposition, these controversies are of vast moment; and cannot be avoided. For, if the Redeemer made legal and proper satisfaction for the sins of any; it is a fair inquiry, and unavoidable too, for whose sins did he make satisfaction? And the answer must be, for the sins of all, or for the sins of a part only. So, if the atonement was, necessarily and inseparably, connected with the bestowment of blessings on believers; how far does this connexion extend? Does it reach to all the blessings which God now confers, or only to some part of them? But, if the views given in this discourse be correct, we may say to the disputants on both sides

* See the reference and note, which form Appendix C.

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of these controversies, as the Saviour once to the Sadducees; ye do err, not knowing the scriptures; for the relation you both take for granted, has no existence.

4. The view we have taken of the nature of the atonement, may assist us in judging of the various systems and speculations in regard to what is called the matter of the atonement, or the effects produced respectively by the obedience and the sufferings of the Mediator. One tells us that the atonement consisted in suffering; another, that it consisted in obedience; and a third, that it consisted in both. According to some, Christ's sufferings procured us pardon, and his obedience procured us merit; and both together, complete salvation. According to others, his sufferings go to shield us from punishment, but all positive blessings are the free gift of God. One has told us, that Christ's obedience or virtue entitled *him* to a reward; and that, on the allowance of his claim, he insisted on liberty to dispose of us at his pleasure.* Many have supposed that his obedience, his holy character, was necessary to render his sufferings meritorious or efficient; but that, in itself, it had no atoning influence. The general opinion has been, that the sufferings of Christ constituted the atonement, or at least was the sole ground of our forgiveness.—Without developing farther the various opinions which have been entertained, or stopping to canvass particular hypotheses; I will observe, that if the view we have taken in this discourse of the nature of the atonement, be correct; it will throw much light over this whole subject, and shew that there is not ground for so many

* See an Essay on Redemption, by *John Balguy*, pp. 107, 8vo. 2d ed. 1785.

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nice distinctions as some have made.—The atonement was not a legal or a forensic transaction. It was altogether extrajudicial, or out of the ordinary course of legal procedure. It was an expedient for avoiding a legal procedure in regard to believers. It was in its nature, simply a display or exhibition, intended to impress on all creatures a deep sense of "the righteousness of God" as a moral governor. Of course, any and every part of the exhibition, and every circumstance attending it,—every thing that Christ either did or suffered, from the time of his descent from heaven till his return thither,—had an atoning efficacy, so far as it contributed to render the exhibition as a whole more impressive. For the transaction operated as a whole, and was intended to produce one general effect. It is not then to be anatomized, and to have distinct offices assigned to its different members. Doubtless some scenes in that august tragedy, which occupied more than thirty years in the performance, were more impressive, and of course contributed more to the atonement, than others. The descent of the Son of God and his assumption of our natures, or the first opening scene of the tragedy, was very striking. His entrance on the arduous and benevolent work of a public teacher and a public benefactor, was a sublime scene. Various others, of much interest, followed rapidly. The plot thickened, and the whole assumed a deeper and deeper colouring, till the last awful scene, which displayed the Son of God nailed to a cross, in agony, unpitied, and bowing his head in death. This was certainly the most stupendous scene in the whole exhibition. It was so viewed by the apostles as well as by common christians; for it is most dwelt on

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by them; and is often spoken of as if the whole atonement was concentrated in it. "The blood of Christ cleanseth:—We are reconciled to God by the death of his Son:—He redeemed us to God by his blood: He made his soul an offering for sin."—Yet doubtless his sufferings anterior to his crucifixion, the various "travails of his soul" while on earth, come into the atonement. Nor are his active labours excluded by the apostles. "By the *righteousness* of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification:—for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous."

5. The views exhibited in this discourse, may suggest to us some of the reasons why repentance and faith are required of those to be saved by Jesus Christ.

As the atonement has no effect upon our characters or deserts, but leaves us just as guilty and obnoxious to punishment as we were before; as it leaves the law in full force against us, and imposes no obligation on the Lawgiver to acquit and save us; but merely enables him to do it consistently with his own honour and with the public interests of his kingdom; it is evident, that God may now offer us salvation on what terms he shall think proper. And, I might add, he may offer it to *whom* he thinks proper, to a part or to all; for the atonement leaves us all equally without claims, and without hopes too, except from the mere mercy of God.—Now the terms he is pleased to state, are repentance and faith. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Repentance or reformation is required of us, not be-

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cause it is any satisfaction for our past transgressions, or by itself an adequate ground of pardon; but because it is necessarily a part of the plan of salvation by grace, founded on the atonement. For, in the first place, the atonement removes only the second ground of punishment, which is the necessity of treating all creatures according to their personal merits, in order to preserve the influence of law and secure the tranquillity and happiness of the universe. The first and the third grounds of punishment, the atonement does not remove, or even touch. The settled abhorrence of all sin which the holy God cannot but feel, or the entire repugnance of his nature to the admission of depraved sinning creatures to an equal share in his affection and his favours with his obedient holy creatures, which was the first ground of punishment; no atonement could possibly remove. It can never be removed, but by the repentance of the sinning creature, by his becoming a holy and obedient child of God. So the third ground of punishment, or the reformation and moral improvement of the sinning creature; must remain of course, so long as the transgressor continues impenitent and unreformed. Now, as the atonement could not remove either of these grounds of punishment, or even weaken them in the slightest degree; repentance is just as necessary to salvation, as if there had never been an atonement made.—Again: from the character of God, as it is displayed by the atonement, it appears that it is his fixed purpose to preserve his kingdom pure, so far at least as it can be done by moral causes. This is a prime object of all his proceedings. How then can he, consistently with his designs, offer pardon to the inhabitants of a sinful world,

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without insisting on their repentance? Evidently, he would frustrate his own purposes, if he should suffer his Son to become the minister of sin. When opportunity was presented him for bringing the most powerful of all motives for amendment, to bear on the minds of a whole race of fallen creatures, he would neglect it, and would leave them wholly to their own choice whether to be virtuous or vicious.—And further, such a procedure would greatly impair, if not entirely destroy, the efficacy of the atonement on his whole kingdom. For to offer pardon to transgressors, without insisting on their repentance, when it might so easily be done, and when it would be so likely to produce the best effects; would indicate very great indifference to sin. It would be an exhibition of character directly opposed to the exhibition made by the atonement; and would therefore powerfully counteract its efficacy. Thus to preserve the atonement unimpaired, to render it a safe and sufficient ground of pardon; the repentance, the entire reformation of the pardoned sinner must be peremptorily demanded.

Faith, the other condition of salvation, is a belief of the truths exhibited in the Gospel, and a reliance on the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ, for justification and eternal life.—Wherever the Gospel is preached, this is a suitable condition; not however, because faith has power to unite us to the Redeemer, in such a mysterious union as causes our guilt or punishment to be transferable to him, and his merits to pass back to us or to our account. For such a union is deemed impossible; nor is it supposed or required by the doctrine of the atonement.—But faith is properly made a condition

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of salvation, because it implies a right temper and behaviour on the part of the person saved. It implies that he has enlightened and correct views of God, of Christ, of himself; and that he feels as one in his condition ought. It brings him upon his knees, as a suppliant before God. It causes him to humble himself, to acknowledge his guilt and ill desert, and to ask for pardon as a blessing of which he is utterly unworthy. It requires him publickly to honour the atonement, and so to do what he can to promote its salutary influence on the universe. It is such an act of entire submission, such a surrendry of himself and of all his interests into the hands of God, as at once removes all distance between him and his Maker, and lays a foundation for that cordial, affectionate intercourse in future between him and God, which it is the very object of redemption to produce.

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APPENDIX, A.

Concise history of the doctrine of Atonement.

The fathers did not sufficiently discriminate between the means of *sanctification* and the grounds of *justification*. They considered Jesus Christ as their only deliverer both from sin itself and from its punishment. To obtain salvation, they supposed, much was required of them. Without defining precisely what they must themselves do, and what Christ had done, or would do for them; they seem to have regarded salvation as a whole, and as such they frequently ascribed it to different causes. The blood of Christ, the ransom he paid, and their faith in him and obedience to him, as well as baptism, alms, fasting, penance, prayer, and martyrdom,—all were spoken of in much the same terms, and not unfrequently represented as, severally, the ground of their entire salvation.

It was, however, the current opinion, from the end of the second century down to the reformation, that on a person's embracing and professing the christian religion by baptism, all his past sins were cancelled; and that, for the sins he might afterwards commit, he must suffer penance, give alms, fast and pray, unless he could atone for them all by martyrdom.

Whether God could have saved us in any other way than that described in the gospel, was a question on which the fathers were by no means agreed. *Basil*, *Ambrose*, and others, (on the authority of Ps. xlix. 8.) denied, while *Athanasius*, both the *Gregories*, *Theodoret*, *Augustine*, &c. affirmed it.

The death of Christ, they often considered in the light of a *sacrifice for sin*; and often too, in that of a *ransom* paid for the redemption of captives. They considered all men as having resigned themselves up willing slaves of the god of this world; who therefore had over them the rights of a conqueror over captives. To rescue them from this captivity, Christ paid his own life a ransom. Thus *Justin*, *Irenaeus*, *Clemens Alex.* *Tertullian*, *Origin*, *Basil*, &c. who maintained that the ransom was paid to the devil. Indeed this was the general opinion in the earlier ages. But *Gregory Naz.* *Augustine*, *Athanasius*, and *Ambrose*, held that the ransom was paid to God;—a sentiment which was generally held among the schoolmen.

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From the fourth century onward, both natures of the Saviour were supposed to be concerned in the atonement.

The schoolmen were the first to give system to many doctrines of the bible. *Anselm*, in the 11th century, is regarded as laying the foundation of that scheme of the atonement which was adopted by the reformers. Some traces of similar opinions are to be found at an earlier period; but his book, entitled, *Cur Deus Homo?* first gave them form and currency. He maintained, that to sin is to rob God of the honour due to him; and that every sinner thus becomes a debtor to God; and an insolvent debtor, because, if he reforms, he can never perform in any given period more than the service due for that period. Hence a redeemer was necessary; who must be God as well as man, that he might pay more honour to God than could be demanded of him.—Jesus Christ was such a saviour. Taking our debt on himself, he cancelled it, by suffering the penalty of the law.—This theory soon became popular. *Thomas Aquinas* adopted it, and added, that the satisfaction made by Christ was superabundant, or more than was absolutely necessary; because, he being God, his sacrifice had infinite value, while men being finite their debt was so. The Dominicans and afterwards the Jesuits, embraced and defended this scheme. But *Duns Scotus*, *Occam*, the Nominalists and Franciscans, denied that Christ actually suffered the penalty of the law; and maintained that he endured only what God graciously accepted as equivalent to it.

Luther and the other reformers adopted this theory of Anselm, which they extended so as to make the atoning death of Christ a satisfaction to God for *all sins*, and not merely for sins committed before baptism. This modification was of vast moment, as it swept away all the schemes of personal merit which had been accumulating on the church for ages, and sent men to Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Still the scheme had its difficulties. It exhibited God the Father, as unforgiving; it supposed a real transfer of guilt and merit; and it seemed to exonerate believers from all obligation to obey the law of God. Among the many who endeavoured to defend or to modify it, *Grotius* stands conspicuous. He taught that Christ made satisfaction, not to God, but to the *law;* the honour of which must be supported for the sake of the public good. Our guilt also, he conceived not to be transferred to Christ; but God, as a sovereign and law-

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giver, relaxed the law, by allowing its *penalty* to be transferred to Christ. Thus the innocent suffered for the guilty; which, though contrary to distributive justice, was not wrong, since Christ consented to it, and the public good required it. This scheme with some modification, has extended over most protestant nations, and has nearly supplanted the theory of Anselm.

In this historical sketch, no notice is taken of the schemes which sink the atonement into a mere device for persuading and enabling men to repent, under the expectation that God will then forgive them. Some account of these schemes may be seen in *Brettschneiders'* Entwickelung, § 107. S. 612. and Handbuch d. Dogmatik. B. II. S. 323. also in *Magee*, on Atonement and Sacrifice.

I will here close this article with notices of the histories of this doctrine, which I have consulted, and from which the reader may obtain more full satisfaction.

1. *Grotius*, in his Defensio Fidei &c. in Op. tom. III. gives us ten folio pages of mere quotations from the Lat. and Gr. fathers and the schoolmen.

2. *J. F. Cotta*, Historia Doctrinae de Redemp. Eccles. in the 4th vol. of *J. Gerhardi* Loci Theol. p. 105—132. 4to. *This history extends from the birth of Christ to the middle of the last century; but is rather superficial.*

3. *Joseph Priestly*, D. D. History of the Corruptions of Christianity, vol. I. pp. 88—161. ed. Boston 1797. "*This work from the name of the author, has obtained more notice than, from its superficial contents and the every where visible ignorance of the sources of history, it deserves.*" *Münscher*, Dogmengesch, Einleitung, § 21.

4. *W. C. L. Ziegler*, Historia Dogmatis de Redemptione, Gotting. 1791, also in Commentt. Theol. vol. V. pp. 227—299. 8vo.—*good.*

5. *W. Münscher*, Handbuch der Christ. Dogmengeschichte, B. II. S. 204—262, and B. IV. S. 263—319, 8vo. Marpurg, 1809. *This brings the history down to A. D.* 600, *in a very satisfactory manner.*

Appendix B.

Much of the obscurity and difficulty attending the doctrine of the atonement, arise, I conceive, from confounding the different meanings of the word justice. It will not then be unsuitable to give a distinct account of the authorized senses of this word, so far as they relate to the subject before us.

The *holiness* of God is his absolute moral perfection, or the sum

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of his moral attributes viewed merely as attributes. His *righteousness* is nothing more than the display of his holiness or moral perfection, in his conduct towards his creatures. See *Brettschneider's* Handbuch der Dogm. I. S. 347, and *Döderlein*, Theol. Christ. § 93. obs. 5. vol. I. p. 333.—The word *justice* has several meanings. Sometimes it is synonymous with righteousness. In this acceptation it is called *general justice*; to distinguish it from the other acceptations, in which it is called *particular* or *simple justice*. General justice has respect to *all* the laws which ought to govern our conduct, and includes the whole list of moral virtues. *Particular* justice has respect only to the claims of others upon us, and consists in giving to every one his due.—The distinction has been explained by a recurrence to the doctrine of perfect and imperfect rights. A *perfect right* is that which persons have to things properly their own; and to give them possession of which is conferring on them no favour, but merely discharging a debt. It is a right which a man may challenge, and which the law does, or should, always help him to recover. Such are the rights of a man to his property, to protection from oppression and injury, to acquittal when proved innocent, to the fulfilment of all contracts and promises made to him. An *imperfect right* is that which a beggar has to charity, and which every man has to kind offices according to his necessities; a right however, which he can never challenge or enforce, and the recognition of which brings him under an obligation of gratitude to a benefactor. Now *general justice* regards *all* the rights of others, whether perfect or imperfect. It consists in allowing due influence to all the considerations which ought to govern our conduct. It involves the exercise of various virtues at the same time, or in the same act; and is on that account, sometimes called *mixed justice*. *Particular* or *simple justice* consists in violating no man's perfect rights, or in satisfying all his just claims upon us; "Justitia in suo cuique tribuendo cernitur." Simple justice is commonly divided into *distributive* and *commutative* justice. The former is concerned in the distribution of honours and privileges or burdens and services, among the members of a society. It is peculiarly the virtue of a governour or public officer. It requires him to observe equality in the distribution of rewards and punishments, privileges and burdens, paying regard only to the condition and the merits of each individual. The latter, commutative justice, respects merely compacts and bargains about property and services. It requires equality in the things commuted, or

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that an exact equivalent be given for what is received, without any regard to persons or characters.—To these three kinds of justice, some add what is called *regal* or *rectoral* justice, which requires the governing power or sovereign of a realm to make such enactments and so to relax, modify or suspend the execution of the law, as to secure the highest good of the community, in cases where the ordinary course of distributive justice would be injurious and therefore wrong. But this need not be made a distinct species of justice, since it is in its nature nothing different from general justice. I mention it here only because it occurs in some treatises on the atonement.—The threefold division of justice stated above, whether it be the best that can be devised or not, has been generally received ever since the days of Aristotle, and is that to which moralists and others most commonly refer. See *Dwight's* Theol. Serm. x. vol. I. pp. 160—163, and *Grove's* Moral Phil. vol. II. pp. 238—244, 254—256, and the writers there referred to.

In treating of the justice of God, divines are accustomed to discriminate only two forms of it, *legislative* and *executive;* the former concerned in the enactment of laws, and the latter in the execution of them.—*Commutative* justice can hardly be predicated of God, as he is a being who gives to all but receives from none. *Distributive* justice, it would seem, may be predicated of him, and that too of the highest kind; because all his laws are equal, and their execution impartial. And yet we cannot suppose a being of such consummate perfection as he is, ever to perform any act without a due regard to *all* the rights of his creatures, and allowing due influence to *all* the considerations which ought to govern his conduct. But this would bring every act of justice performed by him completely under the definition of *general* justice. Shall we then say that distributive justice is not an attribute of God? By no means. But we must say, that distributive justice in him, is not that limited, one-eyed virtue which it often is in men, and which the common definition makes it; that is, it does not regard merely the *claims* of his creature, upon him. It is in the nature of it general justice presiding in the enactment and execution of permanent laws. In his permanent enactments, and in the ordinary execution of law, he does indeed give to every one his due, though from other considerations superadded to that of their deserts or claims; but in mercifully suspending the arm of punitive justice, in extraordinary enactments for

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the sake of greater good than could be obtained by the mere execution of permanent laws,—in a word, in the formation and execution of the whole system of grace,—the justice which is diplayed is not distributive justice, even that elevated kind of it which we ascribe to God; it is unequivocally *general justice.*

For these reasons, I do not hesitate to say, that *δικαιοσυνη* in Rom. iii. 24, is *general*, not distributive, *justice.* And to be consistent, every one must admit it, who admits that the justice of God in any sense of the word, is here intended; and at the same time admits that the penalty of the law was not actually and literally executed on Jesus Christ substituted for us and charged with all our guilt.—See the younger Pres. *Edwards*, Three Serm. in Selections on the atonement, pp. 351—358. Pres. *Maxcy*, Discourses, Ibid. pp. 205—208. *Burge*, on Atonement, pp. 161—165. *Parkhurst*, Gr. Lex. *δικαιοσυνη*, and *Nares*, Remarks on Version of N. T. p. 160.

Appendix, C. p. 19.

For arguments in support of the doctrine of legal satisfaction by vicarious punishment, see *Grotius*, Defensio F. C. de Satisfactione, cap. IV. Op. tom. III. pp 311—315. *F. Turrettin*, de Satisfactione Christi, Disp. II. § 35—50. pp. 50—59, and Disp. X. *A. Fuller's* Dialogues, Pt. III. Convers. I, II, and, The Doctrine of the Aton. explained and defended, by *a Christian of the ancient School*, in Panoplist, Vol. II. pp. 453, 513, 560, and Vol. III. pp. 114, 155. Arguments against legal satisfaction by vicarious punishment, may be seen in *J. Balguy's* Essay on Redemption, pp. 12—23, ed. 1785. *E. D. Griffin*, on the Extent of the Aton. Pt. I. ch. 7. pp. 113—171. *C. Burge*, Essay on Aton. ch. 6 and 7, particularly ch. 7, pp. 195—216.

This subject has, I conceive, been embarrassed chiefly, by the general prevalence of the old scholastic notions respecting the transferable character of guilt and punishment, and by reasoning from the analogy of human governments without discriminating between acts of sovereignty and the mere execution of law.—From the days of Anselm and Aquinas, or from the eleventh century to the eighteenth, the great body of Western christians believed that the Mediator so took the place of transgressors, or at least of penitent believing ones, that their guilt was either actually transferred or legally imputed to him; and that he of course became legally obnoxious to punishment, and really suffered the curse of the law or what was equivalent to it. The reformers generally, and most of

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their successors till some time in the last century, held these sentiments. After the impossibility of transferring moral character or guilt and obedience, began to be seen ; the legal imputation of it, or the justice of treating persons as if such a transfer had really taken place, was tenaciously held by some ; while others discriminated between guilt and punishment, and held to the transfer of the latter only. All these, more or less overlooked the nature of the penalty of the divine law ; and confounded the ideas of forfeiture and of simple punishment. They considered the transgressor as bound to *pay* something ; and supposed that the payment of the forfeiture, whether by himself or by another, satisfied the demands of the law. And when reasoning on the subject, they drew analogies from the proceedings in human governments, without discriminating between acts of sovereignty and the mere execution of law ; or if they saw and admitted the distinction, as many of them did, yet they did not conform their language to it, but continued to use the terms *law*, *satisfaction*, *legal justice*, &c. in the customary vague manner. From this source, so much obscurity and misunderstanding have arisen, that it may not be improper just to state in few words the distinction, which should never have been neglected. The supreme power in a nation, not only enacts and repeals the laws of the country, but it sometimes grants dispensations, or suspends and modifies the operation of the existing laws ; by forbidding prosecutions, remitting penalties and granting pardons, in criminal cases ; and by allowing of chancery proceedings in some civil causes. From the imperfection of all human legislation, occasions will arise when the public good will be promoted, and more perfect justice be done to individuals, by suspending the regular course of legal justice ; and the more imperfect the laws, the more frequent these occasions. But it is only the sovereign of the nation, or some one possessing a portion of his power, that can meet the exigences of these cases ; the judges and all the ordinary ministers of justice are bound to follow strictly the course the law prescribes. They are not to be guided by their own wisdom and judgment, or by their own ideas of what is reasonable and proper, except where the laws expressly give them discretionary power. The law is their rule, so far as it extends ; and within those limits, legal justice is the only justice they are to know. Now it is with reference to the exercise of legal justice in a criminal trial, that we speak of a legal justification, or a justification on the ground of law and justice. In this, which is doubtless the proper sense of

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the words, we affirm that the justification of believers in Jesus Christ, does not proceed on the ground of law and justice; that the divine law did not allow of a transfer of our punishment to him, nor permit his sufferings to be set to our account; and that nothing the Mediator could possibly do or suffer, would satisfy the demands of the law upon us. And this we say is evident from the nature of law, in all governments, human and divine. Hence we pronounce the justification of believers, to be an act of the sovereign mercy of God, a departure from the regular course of justice, and such a departure as leaves the claims of the law forever unsatisfied. We mean that it is analogous to those sovereign acts of the supreme power in a nation, by which the regular course of legal justice is arrested; and that it is such an act as the ministers of legal justice could not perform.—Overlooking this distinction, or confounding all the acts of human rulers, many writers on the atonement, finding that in human governments much use is made of discretionary power; and that in the early ages especially, magistrates followed very much their own discretion or rather caprice, in the administration of justice; have been led to consider the justification of believers in Christ as a judicial act or the act of a judge seated on the bench of justice. The judge, say they, saw in the vicarious sufferings of the Mediator, a full satisfaction of all the demands of the divine law; and therefore he pronounced us legally acquitted. These writers could find, especially in ancient history, some instances of human rulers allowing and even requiring the innocent to suffer for the guilty: and these were deemed examples in point. They found all antiquity admiring the ingenuity and extolling the virtue of some such rulers: and this was evidence that the common sense of mankind approved such justice. They could see and feel that the occasional exercise of sovereign or discretionary power, suspending or modifying the operation of human laws, is really necessary; and this satisfied their consciences, their moral sense, that strict justice might require or at least admit a similar power to interpose and modify the operations of the divine law: for in their zeal for a favourite opinion, they unhappily forgot that the law of God as administered by him, can never fail to do perfect justice, and that any suspension of its operation would of course be a suspension of justice.

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2.

The Faith once delivered to the Saints.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT WORCESTER, MASS. OCT. 15, 1823,

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

REV. LOAMMI IVES HOADLY,

TO THE PASTORAL OFFICE

OVER THE

CALVINISTIC CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN THAT PLACE.

BY LYMAN BEECHER, D. D.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY CROCKER AND BREWSTER,
No. 50, Cornhill.
1823.

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SERMON.

JUDE 3.

BELOVED, WHEN I GAVE ALL DILIGENCE TO WRITE UNTO YOU OF THE COMMON SALVATION, IT WAS NEEDFUL FOR ME TO WRITE UNTO YOU, AND EXHORT YOU THAT YE SHOULD EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH, WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

By the faith once delivered to the saints, is to be understood the doctrines of the gospel. These were delivered to the saints by holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The saints to whom they were delivered, were those who constituted the church under the Old dispensation, and the New.

The exhortation to contend for them earnestly, supposes that they would be powerfully assailed; and, yet, that they might be known and defended.

It is proposed, in this discourse, to give an epitome of what is supposed to be the faith delivered to the saints;—to state the reasons for believing it such;—and to point out the manner, in which it becomes the churches of our Lord to contend for it.

The faith once delivered to the saints included, it is believed, among other doctrines, the following:—

That men are free agents; in the possession of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as render it practicable for them to do whatever God requires; reasonable that he should require it; and fit that he should inflict, literally, the entire penalty of disobedience—such ability is here intended, as lays a perfect foundation for government by law, and for rewards and punishments according to deeds.

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That the law of God requires love to God with all the heart, and impartial love for men; together with certain overt duties to God and men, by which this love is to be expressed; and that this law is supported by the sanctions of eternal life and eternal death.

That the ancestors of our race violated this law; that, in some way, as a consequence of their apostacy, all men, as soon as they become capable of accountable action, do, *of their own accord*, *most freely*, and *most wickedly*, withhold from God the *supreme love* and from man the *impartial love* which the law requires, beside violating many of its practical precepts: and that the obedience of the heart, which the law requires, has ceased entirely from the whole race of man.

That, according to the principles of moral government, obedience, either antecedent to transgression or subsequent, cannot avert the penalty of law; and that pardon, upon condition of repentance merely, would destroy the efficacy of moral government.

That an atonement has been made for sin by Jesus Christ; with reference to which God can maintain the influence of his law and forgive sin, upon condition of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ:—that all men are invited sincerely, in this way to return to God, with an assurance of pardon and eternal life if they comply.

That a compliance with these conditions, is practicable, in the regular exercise of the powers and faculties given to man as an accountable creature; and is prevented only by the exercise of a voluntary, criminal aversion to God so inflexibly obstinate, that by motives merely men are never persuaded to repent and believe.

That God is able, by his Spirit, to make to the mind of man such an exhibition of the truth, as shall unfailingly convince him of sin, render him willing to obey the gospel, and actually and joyfully obedient.

That this special influence of the Holy Spirit is given according to the supreme discretion or good pleasure of God; and yet, ordinarily, is so inseparably associated with the use

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of means by the sinner, as to create ample encouragement to attend upon them, and to render all hopes of conversion while neglecting or rejecting the truth, or while living in open sin, eminently presumptuous.

That believers are justified by the merits of Christ through faith; and are received into a covenant with God, which secures their continuance in holiness forever;—while those, who die in their sins, will continue to sin wilfully, and to be punished justly for ever.

That God exercises a providential government; which extends to all events in such a manner, as to lay a just foundation for resignation to him in afflictions brought upon us by the wickedness of men, and for gratitude in the reception of good in all the various modes of human instrumentality—that all events shall illustrate his glory and be made subservient to the good of his kingdom—and that this government is administered, in accordance with a purpose or plan, known and approved of by him from the beginning.

Finally, that the God of the universe has revealed himself to us as existing in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; possessing distinct and equal attributes, and in some unrevealed manner so united as to constitute *one God.*

These are the doctrines, which, it is believed, were delivered to the saints, and which have been held substantially, though with some variety of modification, by the true church of God in all ages. To prevent circumlocution, I shall, in this discourse, call them *the Evangelical System*, and for the same reason, I shall call the opposite *the Liberal System.**

It has been common to support these doctrines by the quotation of proof texts. But to these a different exposition is given more reasonable, it is said, and carrying with it a higher probability of truth; which leads to critical exposi-

* I choose to call these doctrines the evangelical system, not only because I believe them to be the Gospel; but because no man, or denomination, has held them so exclusively, as to render it proper to designate them by the name of an individual or a sect. It is a select system, which some of almost every denomination hold, and some reject; and which ought to be characterised by some general term indicative of the system as held in all ages and among all denominations of Christians.

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tion, and opens a wide field for evasion and creates perplexity and indecision.

My design at present is to avail myself of collateral evidence only, with the view of attempting to decide in this way which is the correct exposition of the proof texts the evangelical or the liberal exposition.

For the sake of argument, we shall suppose the evidence from exposition to be on each side exactly balanced, and proceed to lay into the scale of evangelical exposition those arguments which seem to furnish evidence of its correctness. I observe, then,

I. That the doctrines of the evangelical system are in accordance with the most direct and obvious meaning of the sacred text. By *obvious meaning*, I intend that, which is actually suggested, without note or comment to the minds of honest and unlettered men. That the proof texts teach the doctrines of the evangelical system in this manner, is alleged by learned infidels as a reason for rejecting the inspiration of the Bible; by Unitarian commentators and writers, as a reason for restraining, modifying and turning aside the text; and by Critics, who translate or expound without reference to theological opinions. No translators have been able to maintain a reputation for classical literature, and to sink in a translation the obvious meaning below, and bring up the philosophical meaning upon the surface.* The editors of the "Improved Version" have manifested as much good will, with as little conscience, in the attempt, as has ever appeared; and yet have been compelled to allow the proof texts, in most instances, to speak the offensive doctrines, and to content themselves with a simple contradiction of them in notes and comments. Interpretation according to the obvious import has resulted always in the evangelical system; while expositors according to the supposed rational and philosophical mode of exposition have differed indefinitely. It is not the evangelical, but the liberal rule of interpretation, which has

* This fact shows, that these remarks are as applicable to the original text, as to the translation, for surely, if the evangelical were not the obvious import in the original, nothing would be easier than to give a literal translation, which should leave them out of sight entirely.

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filled the world with divers doctrines, perplexity and doubt. All versions, and all expositions according to the obvious meaning, of whatever country or age, do substantially agree in the evangelical system; and agree with the understanding of mankind at large who read the Bible. The Bible, for the most part, was written also by men, who understood language only according to its obvious import;—and for the use of men, to whom it must have been a sealed book upon any other principle of interpretation. Add to this, the testimony of the Bible to its own plainness: that it can be read by him that runs; and understood by the wayfaring man though a fool; that it is a lamp to the path; that it furnishes the man of God thoroughly; that it is profitable for doctrine; that it is able to make wise to salvation; that it creates obligation to know the truth and renders error inexcusable. Now if the obvious meaning of the proof texts be not the true one; and if the true meaning be one which can be seen only by men of classical and philosophical vision; then the common people have *no Bible.* For the book itself teaches *them* nothing; and the critical expositions of uninspired men are not a revelation. The character of God is also implicated, as having practised on his subjects a most deplorable deception; as having taught them falsehood in their own tongue, and the truth in an unknown tongue; as having required them to abhor, upon pain of his eternal displeasure, what he has taught them, by the only import of terms which they can comprehend; and to love and obey what he has not taught them, by any import of language, which they can possibly comprehend. Was the glorious God ever more scandalised than by such an imputation? We have heard of his having made a great part of mankind on purpose to damn them, and of his sending to hell helpless victims for the nonperformance of impossibilities; and, if such were indeed his character and conduct, I know not what other Bible we could expect, than one impossible to be understood and framed to deceive. But on this subject, we adopt the language of a distinguished advocate of the liberal system. "It is impossible that a teacher of infinite wisdom should expose those, whom he would teach, to

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infinite error. He will rather surpass all other instructors in bringing down truth to our apprehension. A revelation is a gift of light; it cannot thicken and multiply our perplexities."*

2. It is the uniform testimony of the Bible, that the righteous love the truth; and that the wicked are opposed to it.

If then, we can decide who are the wicked, in the Scriptural sense, which system they approve, and which they oppose; we have an inspired decision which is the faith delivered to the saints. But the Scriptures have decided that irreligious and profane persons are wicked men;—and that all persons of confirmed vicious habits, liars, drunkards, thieves, adulterers, and all the impure are wicked men. They have placed in the same class the ambitious, who love the praise of men more than the praise of God; and the voluptuous, who love pleasure more than God. Now that some of this description of sinners are found under both systems, is admitted; but which system do they, as a body, prefer; and against which do they manifest unequivocal hostility. It requires no proof but universal observation to support the position, that the irreligious, immoral and voluptuous part of the community prefer the liberal system, and are vehement in their opposition to the evangelical system.† If this assertion needs confirmation; assemble the pleasure-loving and licentious community of the world:—the patrons of balls and theatres and masquerades:—and let the doctrines of the evangelical system be preached plainly to them. Would they be pleased with them? Would they endure them? Do this class of the community, where their numbers or influence preponderate, any where, in the wide world, settle and support an evangelical minister; and if they support the preaching of any

* Channing's Sermon, second Baltimore Ed. pp. 12, 13.

† The reader will observe, that we do not say, nor do we believe it to be true, that all, or even the majority, who professedly embrace the liberal system, are wicked in the sense explained. We know, and we gladly embrace the opportunity to acknowledge, that there are among them many whose talents and learning, whose amiable and generous dispositions, and whose devotedness to the public good, on many accounts deserve our respect and commendation. There are, in this class of the community, many whom we not only respect and esteem, but whom, as connexions and friends we tenderly love. Our assertion is that those who are wicked, in the Scripture sense of that term, do, as a body, whatever preaching they attend, and with whatever denomination they are classed, dislike the doctrines of the evangelical faith and prefer those of the liberal system.

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system of doctrines, is it not substantially the liberal system? Go to the voluntary evening association, for conference and prayer; and which system will you hear breathed out in supplication? Then go to the voluntary evening association for gambling or inebriation, and which system with its patrons, will you hear loaded with execration and ridicule? When a division is made in a town or parish, by the settlement of a minister of liberal or evangelical opinions; which side do a majority of the pious take, if there be on earth any such thing as piety manifested by credible evidence; and which side do the wicked take, if there be on earth any such class of persons as wicked men—proved to be such by their deeds. If a majority is obtained against evangelical opinions, was it ever known to be done, by the most pious and moral part of the community, in opposition to the suffrages of the most irreligious and flagitious? There is, then, some powerful cause, of universal operation, which arrays the irreligious part of the community against the evangelical system. But, according to the bible, of two opposing systems, one of which must be true, that which the wicked approve is false, and that which they oppose and hate is true;—"for he that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

3. The Evangelical System produces the same effects universally, as were produced by the faith delivered to the saints.

The maxim, that *the same cause, in the same circumstances, will produce the same effect*, is as true in the moral as in the natural world: the laws of mind, and the operation of moral causes, being just as uniform as the laws of matter. The Gospel, the greatest moral cause which ever operated in the world, is the same now as in the apostolic age; and the heart of man, civilized or uncivilized, is also the same. So that this great cause is operating now, precisely in the same circumstances as it did in the primitive age;—for the heart of man is the moral world, and is the same now as then. If there be a system of doctrines then, at the present time, whose effects universally are the same

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with those produced by the faith once delivered to the saints; that system demonstrably, *is the faith* which was once delivered to the saints. Identity of moral effect, proves identity of moral cause.

The illustration of the argument from effects must consist of many particulars, and of matters of fact The argument, therefore, can only be stated concisely, without attempting to answer every possible objection. The facts, too, may be regarded by some as invidious. I have only to say that no fact will be stated, as such, which is not believed to be notoriously true, and, if denied, capable of unequivocal proof; and as to the invidious bearing of matters of fact, or of arguments, I am persuaded it is both a false delicacy and an unsound cause, which would shrink from this test, and shield itself under forms of alleged decorum. But I must be allowed to believe, also, that no real decorum is violated by the statement of facts or the pressure of arguments, where the object is important, the design honest, and the manner sober and respectful. Systems of religion, as well as of natural philosophy, may be brought to the test of actual experiment. "By their fruits shall ye know them." But if the moral world were by the laws of decorum closed against us; and we might only theorise without, upon practical tendencies, and not enter it to collect and appeal to facts; we might contend earnestly, but certainly should contend to very little purpose. To the word and testimony of God and to matters of fact we appeal.

We observe then that the evangelical system occasions the same objections precisely now, which were occasioned by the faith once delivered to the saints.

Such an exhibition was given of old of the particular Providence of God, as occasioned, on the part of thieves, and liars, and adulterers, and idolaters, the extenuating plea, "We are delivered to do all these abominations."* God governs the moral world by such irresistible influence, that crimes are as much a matter of physical necessity as rain and

* Jer. vii, 10.

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sunshine. Do I need to say to this audience, that the charge constantly urged against the Decrees of God, as an article of the evangelical system, is, that it destroys accountable agency, and makes men machines, and all actions necessary by an irresistible fatality. The faith of the saints then and the evangelical faith are perverted in this article exactly alike.

The ancient faith included an article which led the wicked among the Jews to extenuate their crimes by the allegation, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;"* i. e. Sin in man is a physical property, transmitted from father to son, as bones and sinews are, and alike inconsistent with choice or blame.

And is not the objection, urged against the doctrine of Original Sin, as contained in the evangelical system, the same? The inspired answer to the objection of old was, That children are accountable only for their own voluntary exercises and deeds; and this is the reply returned now by the patrons of the evangelical system.

The degree of human Depravity as taught in the Bible, led the people in a time of great wickedness, to say, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them and die, how should we then live?"† i. e. If we be dead in sin, to the exclusion of all spiritual life, how can we be free agents, and how can we help ourselves, or be to blame?—and as if they had been told by the prophet, that their death in sin was voluntary and criminal, though entire and certain in its efficacy; they seem to say, Well, if we are so wicked, then, that we certainly shall pine away and die in our sins, how can we be to blame? If we shall not turn of ourselves, how can we turn; and of what use is ability, that will never be exerted. Now are not these precisely the objections which are at this day alleged, constantly, against the doctrines of man's entire Depravity, and moral Inability, as articles of the evangelical system.

Our Savior asserts the necessity of some great change to qualify a man for the kingdom of heaven; which, to a ruler

* Ezek. xviii, 2. † Ezek. xxxiii, 10.

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in Israel, appeared mysterious and even impossible. And is there not a great change insisted on in the evangelical system as indispensable to salvation; to which masters in Israel now, confess, that they are strangers; and which they regard as impossible without the destruction of free-agency and accountability?

The manner of a sinner's justification was delivered to the saints, in such terms, as occasioned the objection, that it made void the law: superseding the obligations and motives to a moral life, and leading to licentiousness. "Do we then make void the law through faith?" "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" And is not this precisely the objection which has been urged against the doctrine of Justification by faith, as contained in the evangelical system, from the time of the Reformation to this day.

The saints were taught something concerning the sovereignty of God, as having mercy on whom he would; and punishing whom he would;—which produced the objection, "Why then doth he yet find fault; for who hath resisted his will? If wicked men receive their destination as God appoints; why does he blame them. If it be his will that they perish; and they do perish, are they not obedient; and why does he find fault?" And is not this the objection, which is urged unceasingly against the doctrine of Election, as taught in the evangelical system? To our reply, that the will of God, as a moral rule to man, and the will of God as a rule of administration to himself in disposing of rebels, are distinct; the answer is, "Metaphysics! metaphysics! The will of God is the will of God; and if sinners *in any sense* act in accordance with any will of God, they are obedient; and he has no cause to find fault." Now did the liberal exposition of the ninth of Romans ever produce, in the whole history of man, the objection which it produced from the lips of Paul, and still produces as explained by evangelical ministers? Or did it ever produce from liberal lips, the reply, "Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?"—We have only to say, that the Apostle's answer to the objection is the same, which evangelical men have always returned, "Who art thou, O man, that re-

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pliest against God?" Shall a being of yesterday arraign the conduct of his Maker? Shall a rebel sit in judgment upon his God? Are not men rebels, justly doomed to die; and, in reference to their character and condition as condemned criminals, all clay of the same lump? And is not the discretion of God to pardon or reprieve as absolute as that of the potter over his clay, to make one vessel to honor and another to dishonor? Do you object that the punishment threatened is unjust? But how could God make a vessel of *mercy* of one whose punishment would be unjust; or a vessel of *wrath* of one whose punishment would be undeserved? Do you call men impotent because I have compared them to clay; or assert that the sovereignty of God, in saving some, *causes* and renders unavoidable the destruction of them that perish? *They* perish for their crimes against law, who might have been executed without offers of pardon. *They* perish, who are able to accept the terms of pardon, *for* rejecting them. Nor are they cut down in haste. With much long suffering they are endured, while by despising the riches of the goodness of God, they fit themselves for destruction. Such is the evangelical reply; and such as we understand his language and argument, is the reply of Paul.

It was objected to the Gospel and conceded in the early age, that, few embraced it but the poor, and the common people. To the poor the Gospel is preached. Have any of the Scribes and Pharisees believed on him? The common people heard him gladly. Not many wise men after the flesh—not many mighty not many noble are called. Celsus, in the second century, exults in the fact, that so few in the higher classes of society had professed christianity, and pours contempt upon the cause as patronized only by mechanics and vulgar people.*

Now is it not notorious that the liberal system of doctrines, unpatronized by the civil power, has never been the religion of the common people in any country; but rather the religion of men of philosophical minds and literary habits: i. e. the

* Are there no attempts making to create an impression now, that the liberal system is patronized peculiarly by persons in high life, by men of taste and talents, of wealth and refinement, and that the opposite system is fast going down, to be the religion of the common people only and the poor?

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evangelical system has been patronized chiefly by that class of society, which patronized the faith delivered to the saints; while the oposite system has relied for patronage more commonly on the arm of government, and that class of men in society who as a body rejected the gospel. A late writer of high reputation on the liberal side in this country says, "It is not to be doubted that, throughout our country, a very large proportion of those men, who for their talents and learning and virtues, have the most influence in the community, and have it in their power to do the most towards giving a right direction to the public feeling and the public sentiment, are dissatisfied with the Calvinistic and Trinitarian form, in which they have had religion presented to them; but are prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions, by an unwillingness to encounter opposition, and obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful."* The evangelical system in this country is embraced then, by the same classes extensively, which embraced the Gospel; and is extensively disapproved by that class of men who rejected the Gospel.

The faith delivered to the Saints occasioned a virulent hatred. It was not hatred of it as false, arising from an ardent love of truth. For Pharisees and Sadducees could tolerate each other; and Pagans could tolerate thirty thousand gods, with all their lust and blood.

And is not the evangelical system encountered by a virulence of opposition, in circumstances which show that it cannot arise from the love of truth or hatred of error. None will pretend that the effects of the evangelical system are as deplorable as the effects of idolatry in its present forms. The evangelical system has produced no temple of impure resort; no gratifications of lust enjoined as acts of worship, no blood of human victims; no burning of widows or drowning infants; no self-inflicted penal tortures. And yet such is the hatred of many to the evangelical system, that they oppose deliberately, all attempts to extend it to the heathen; and on the ground avowedly, that they had rath-

* Dr. Ware's letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists, pp. 146, 147.

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er they would remain as they are than to adopt the evangelical system. In the face of all the absurdity and obscenity and blood of idolatry, not a few have declared, that they would not lift a finger to convert the whole pagan world to the evangelical faith, or words to that effect. They speak kindly of infidels, Mahometans and pagans, and fiercely of all which breathes the Spirit of the evangelical system. Such asperity, the faith delivered to the saints occasioned: and such asperity the evangelical system occasions.

The faith delivered to the saints produced a stricter morality than any cotemporaneous system. Whether this be true of the evangelical system is not to be decided by a comparison of the best characters on one side with the most defective on the other; or of individuals of acknowledged moral purity on both sides, of which it is admitted there are many.* Nor can the moral efficacy of the two systems be decided by the standard of public morality, where the evangelical system has prevailed in the early period of life and exerted its influence upon the conscience, and in the formation of moral habits; or where it still prevails to such an extent, as to exert a powerful modifying influence; and especially where the opposite system is of but recent public notoriety and of limited extent. Great moral causes do not produce their effects immediately; nor, upon every individual, exactly the same effect. Their tendency and efficacy is to be looked for in those communities, where the influence of the two systems has been the most unmingled and of the longest duration; and also in those obvious changes in a community, which, as one or the other prevails, become apparent. With these explanations in view, I remark that the superior moral efficacy of the evangelical system is a matter of unequivocal concession. In an article on predestination in the British Encyclopedia, written, it is said, by Robert Forsyth, Esq , a learned civilian, and an infidel, after giving an account of the Calvinistic and Arminian system, and the preference to the latter it is said, "There is one remark which we think ourselves in justice

* We desire all that is said on this subject to be understood with the same explanation which we have made on p. 8.

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bound to make: It is this, that, from the earliest ages down to our own days, if we consider the character of the ancient stoics, the Jewish Essenes, the modern Calvinists, and Jansenists, compared with that of their antagonists the Epicurians, the Sadducees, the Arminians and the Jesuits; we shall find that they have excelled in no small degree in the practice of the most rigid and respectable virtues, and have been the highest honor to their own age, and the best models for imitation to every succeeding age." This is the testimony of a philosopher to the different moral effects of the two systems, from the time of Augustine at least to the present day.

Dr. Priestly, whose partiality for the evangelical system will not be suspected, says, that those who hold the evangelical doctrines "have less apparent conformity to the world and seem to have more of a real principle of religion." He says also, "Though Unitarian dissenters are not apt to entertain any doubt of the truth of their principles, they do not lay so much stress upon them as other Christians do upon theirs. Nor indeed is there any reason why they should, when they do not consider the holding of them to be at all necessary to salvation. They therefore, take much less pains to make proselytes, and are less concerned to inculcate their principles upon their children, their servants, and their dependents in general. From this principle it is, that great numbers, becoming Unitarians in the church of England, and even among the clergy, do not feel the impropriety and absurdity to say nothing more harsh, of continuing to countenance a mode of worship, which, if they were questioned about it, they would not deny to be according to their own principles, idolatrous and blasphemous. Such persons also having no zeal for speculative religion, merely because they have no zeal for religion in general; their moral conduct, though decent is not what is deemed strict and exemplary."*

In a periodical publication of high literary character, but of decided and known partiality to infidel opinions,† we find

* Discourses on various subjects, pp. 95, 96. † Edinburgh Review.

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the following statements. "Predestination, or doctrines much inclining towards it, have, on the whole, prevailed in the Christian churches of the west since the days of Augustine and Aquinas. Who were the first formidable opponents of these doctrines in the church of Rome? The Jesuits,—the contrivers of courtly casuistry, and the founders of lax morality. Who, in the same church, inclined to the stern theology of Augustine? The Jansenists,—the teachers and the models of austere morals. What are we to think of the morality of Calvinistic nations, especially the most numerous classes of them, who seem, beyond all other men, to be most zealously attached to their religion, and most deeply penetrated with its spirit? Here, if any where, we have a practical and decisive test of the moral influence of a belief in necessarian opinions. In Protestant Switzerland, in Holland, in Scotland, among the English Nonconformists and the Protestants of the North of Ireland, and in the New-England States, Calvinism was long the prevalent faith, and is probably still the faith of a considerable majority. Their moral education was at least completed, and their collective character formed, during the prevalence of Calvinistic opinions. Yet where are communities to be found of a more pure and active virtue?"

The accusations brought against evangelical writers and professors, as requiring too much, or making no sufficient allowance for the weakness of human nature; as rigid, austere, enemies to innocent amusements; as setting themselves up as better than their neighbors; as righteous over much; are also concessions in point; as are also the topics of ridicule having reference as they do to the fastidious strictness of our ancestors and of evangelical professors; to which we may add the invidious names given to them of Puritan Methodist, &c. To all this it may be added, that, sound morality has never in any country or age been so elevated, and so extensively prevalent as in those communities where the evangelical doctrines have been most universally believed, and most diligently taught, in families and schools, and in the sanctuary.

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It has been said I am sensible, that, these salutary effects of the evangelical system are produced by the truths contained in it in common with the liberal system, and in spite of the errors it embraces, and not *by* them Does the truth, then, mingled with absurdity and falsehood, produce better effects than the truth simple and undefiled as in the liberal system it is claimed to be. If it is the truth held in common by the evangelical and liberal systems, which produces these good effects, why does not the liberal system alone produce the same effects. Allow me to suggest another solution.

The evangelical system *requires* a stricter morality, enforced by more powerful motives. It adopts as its rule, the moral law, unmitigated; and its sanctions of eternal life and death. A law which the opposite system regards as too strict, and as set aside or mitigated in accommodation to human frailty; and whose sanctions are regarded as nothing;—or as a salutary temporary discipline;—or as annihilation;—or as a matter of entire uncertainty. Now is it strange that lax requisitions, and feeble uncertain sanctions, do not produce the strict and vigorous morality of the law of God. What would human laws avail, should expositors and judges say, "Men are too wicked to allow of our interpreting the laws strictly. They must not be understood to mean exactly what they say, or to threaten exactly what they speak." Perfect honesty, or truth, or purity is not to be expected; a little fraud, and theft, and perjury, and violence they allow, in accommodation to human weakness; and threaten the *greater crimes* with *no punishment*, or only a beneficial temporary discipline, or exile from the state, or—we know not what.

Again, the evangelical system produces the best attendance on the public worship of God; and, of course, if the moral tendency of each were the same, that would produce the strictest morality, which commanded most extensively and deeply the attention of men. That the doctrines of the evangelical system do this, is claimed by Witherspoon as true in his day in Scotland; and by Overton as true in England, and is admitted by Unitarian writers, and denied by no one.

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It is also admitted in this country recently, as a matter of notoriety "which none will question." It is accounted for, it must be acknowledged, in a way not favorable to the moral tendency of evangelical sentiments. It is on the ground of the intolerable strictness of liberal preaching; so strict and terrifying, that few, besides the more pious and exemplary, can abide it. The whole pleasure-loving, voluptuous and dissipated community being driven panic-struck, by Unitarian denunciation to the horns of the altar in evangelical churches; where, by "smooth preaching," and the hope of impunity in sin, their fears may be allayed, and their consciences quieted.

The faith delivered to the saints produced Revivals of religion.

The preaching of it was attended with sudden anxieties, and deep convictions of sin, and sudden joy in believing; followed by reformation and a holy life. Nor was this the effect of miracles, or itself a miraculous event in the common acceptation of the term. Miracles, merely, produced no such effects. It was under the preaching of the word, that men were pricked in their hearts, and cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" And it was by the moral transformation, which attended the apostolic answer to this question, and not by the power of miracles, that the Gospel defied opposition, and spread during the first three hundred years. There was no resisting it. Conviction attended the word; and a joyful obedience to the faith followed. The very chiefs of opposition, exchanged their weapons of annoyance for the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit.

And do not the same convictions of sin attend the preaching of the evangelical system; and does it not extend its victories in the same manner? By argument merely we convince few, and reclaim none. But there is an efficacy in evangelical preaching on the conscience and on the heart; against which nor learning, nor talents, nor prejudice, nor wrath itself, afford effectual protection. Multitudes who virulently hated, and verily thought that they ought to oppose, evangelical doctrines, and revivals of religion, have been con-

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vinced of their mistake, and sin; and have embraced joyfully the doctrines, which they reviled. Many, who preach the liberal system, can bear witness that they have lost, in this way, again and again, the very pillars of their societies. Defections of the same kind are frequent still, and clothe evangelical doctrines and revivals of religion with a terrifying power.

The faith delivered to the saints was efficacious in the sudden reformation of those who had been long under the dominion of vicious habits.

The apostle enumerates the habits of crime, which prevailed among pagans; and, then writing to the church of Corinth, says, "And such were some of you." But, while the liberal system despairs, professedly, of any sudden reformation from vicious habits, as against the established laws of the moral world; and is unable to produce an instance in which a vicious person has been reformed, by *abandoning the evangelical and adopting the liberal system;* and, while reformation from vicious habits, is a rare event, if it exist at all, under liberal preaching, it is a frequent event for profligates, on *abandoning their confidence in the liberal system and adopting the evangelical, to manifest a most salutary and abiding change of character and conduct.* In almost all the revivals of religion, which are now prevailing in our land, there are some to whom it may be said, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed," &c.

Dr. Chalmers' who preached the liberal system twelve years, and after this the evangelical, says, "And here I cannot but record the effect of an actual though undesigned experiment, which I prosecuted for upwards of twelve years among you. For the greater part of that time, I could expatiate on the meanness of dishonesty, on the villany of falsehood, on the despicable arts of calumny,—in a word, upon all those deformities of character, which awaken the natural indignation of the human heart against the pests and the disturbers of human society. Even at this time I certainly did press the reformations of honor, and truth, and integrity among my people; but I never once heard of any

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such reformations having been effected amongst them. If there was any thing at all brought about in this way, it was more than ever I got any account of. I am not sensible, that all the vehemence with which I urged the virtues and the proprieties of social life, had the weight of a feather on the moral habits of my parishioners. And it was not till I got impressed by the utter alienation of the heart in all its desires and affections from God; it was not till reconciliation to Him became the distinct and the prominent object of my ministerial exertions; it was not till I took the scriptural way of laying the method of reconciliation before them; it was not till the free offer of forgiveness through the blood of Christ was urged upon their acceptance, and the Holy Spirit given through the channel of Christ's mediatorship to all who ask him, was set before them as the unceasing object of their dependance and their prayers; it was not, in one word, till the contemplations of my people were turned to these great and essential elements in the business of a soul providing for its interest with God, and the concerns of its eternity, that I ever heard of any of those subordinate reformations which I aforetime made the earnest and the zealous, but I am afraid at the same time, the ultimate object of my earlier ministrations."*

The faith delivered to the saints produced a spirit of missions.

On the day of Pentecost the number of disciples was one hundred and twenty. And on that day the scales of Jewish prejudice fell from their eyes; and the spirit of missions descended upon their hearts; and, in three hundred years, without colleges, or theological seminaries, or the press, or governmental aid; but, in opposition to its dire hostility, they evangelized the world. And are not the great movements, now making to evangelize the world, conducted chiefly under the auspices, and by the charities of those, who adopt substantially the evangelical system. Are not all the denominations in the world, who believe in the Divinity

* Chalmers' Farewell Discourse addressed to his parishioners of Kilmany in his series of Discourses, pp. 110, 111, 112.

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of Christ and his Atonement, in the depravity of man and his need of a moral renovation by the spirit, and in the doctrine of Justification by faith and future eternal punishment, more or less engaged in the work of missions; and is there in the wide world a denomination which rejects these doctrines, that is thus engaged. And is this system, which does nothing to evangelize the world, the Gospel; and that, which does all that is done in accordance with the efforts of the primitive church, another Gospel?

The faith delivered to the saints produced a piety of great solemnity, ardor and decision.

It was a piety, which took delight in the public worship of God, and in private frequent association for religious conference and prayer: a piety, which included a deep solicitude, and made vigorous exertions, for the conversion of sinners, and experienced peculiar joy in the event: a piety, which espoused openly the cause of Christ, encountered obloquy and the loss of all things, and stood undaunted in the face of danger and produced joy unspeakable in the hour of death.

And is not this, precisely the same cast of piety, which the evangelical system does, and which the liberal system does not, produce? Is not the deeply serious cast of the one regarded as constituting the evangelical, a gloomy religion; and the lighter cast of the other as giving to it vastly the preference on the score of cheerfulness? Is not the ardor of the one, stigmatized as enthusiasm; and the cool, deliberate, intellectual cast of the other regarded as giving to it the enviable preeminence of a rational religion? Does not the one delight in, and the other deprecate, frequent voluntary associations for religious conference and prayer? The one ridicule the supposed work of sudden conversion by the spirit of God; and the other hold it in the highest estimation? Do not the converts to the one system, as far as they are called to it, disregard obloquy, and endure persecution? While, "Throughout our country, a very large proportion of those men, who, for their talents and learning and virtues, have the most influence in the community, are dissatisfied with the

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Trinitarian and Calvinistic form, in which they have had religion presented to them; but are *prevented from making a public avowal of their opinions by an unwillingness to encounter opposition and obloquy, and loss of confidence, and the power of being useful.*"—Are the sentiments which these men, "*all over our country,*" are supposed to prefer to the evangelical system, *The faith once delivered to the saints;* which, in the primitive church, produced a love to Jesus Christ so ardent, an avowal of his doctrine so undaunted, and an enterprize so efficient, as moved onward from conquering to conquer, through good report and evil, through honor and dishonor, through fire and blood? Alas! how, is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed?—But is it so? Is that the primitive faith, which produces none of those consequences; and is that another and an opposite faith, which produces them all?

With respect to the manner in which cordial believers in the two systems die, we have only to say, that generally, professors of religion of evangelical opinions who have in life adorned their profession, approach their last hour without fear and with great composure of mind, and with cheerful resignation. In some instances they, even as the apostle Paul did, desire to depart and be with Christ; and not unfrequently their views and affections and anticipations of glory render them exceedingly joyful in the last hour. Now we ask, and refer for an answer to every man's observation, Is this the manner in which liberal opinions enable those to die who cordially embrace them. If some of this description meet death without fear, are not far greater numbers terrified at his approach? If some are tranquil, are not more agitated? If some manifest resignation, do not a far greater number cling with unyielding grasp to life, or manifest only the resignation of necessity? And are there any, who, by the liberal system are inspired with such love for Christ as to desire earnestly to depart and be with him: and especially are there any whose views and affections and anticipations of glory render their death bed a scene of the most exalted joy?

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The faith delivered to the saints, was attended from the beginning to the end with an unwavering confidence of its truth.

False christs and false prophets arose; but they could not "deceive the elect." Winds of false doctrine blew, but they scattered only the chaff; some also made shipwreck of the faith; but it was not the saints. There were heresies, early; and it was needful that there should be, that they which were approved might be manifest. And they were manifest; for the last Apostle that remained testified, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, no doubt they would have continued with us." But to those, who adhered to the faith, he said, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things:"*—i. e. You know the truth of all those doctrines which some have rejected.

It is admitted, that some patrons of the evangelical system abandon it. But it will not be denied, that, as a general fact, they hold the same system of truth to the end; modified, explained, and proved, with some variation; but the same system undeniably.

But can it be said of the patrons of the liberal system, as a body, that their system, first and last, is the same. Can it be said of an individual scarcely, that he continues to embrace the same system through life. Dr. Priestly has told us that he was first a Calvinist; and that he successively embraced and abandoned, in his way downward to low Socinianism, all the intervening systems; and did not know how long he should maintain his existing faith, or what would come next. The same course has been travelled over by liberal critics and learned expositors in Germany and in this country, it is begun, it is believed, by most, and completed by many, who adopt the liberal system.

Now is it not notorious that evangelical men are reproached, as being singularly confident, that they only are right; and that Unitarians profess to have arrived at certainty *chiefly* in

* 1 John ii, 19, 20.

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respect to the *falsehood of the evangelical system;* while, in relation to their own, there are many points on which they have not *had time* to make up their minds; and concerning which, with *other wise and great and good men,* they continue to doubt. Indeed, it might appear unseemly for men, who had discovered that four out of five of their systems of belief, deliberately adopted, were wrong, to entertain a very high opinion of the powers of their own reason, at least, or to be confident of the truth of their fifth or sixth opinion in respect to the great points of revealed doctrine. But where among these changing men, ever learning their *past errors,* and never coming to the knowledge of the truth; where is that unction from the Holy One which the saints possessed, and its attendant knowledge of all things.*

4. A departure from the faith delivered to the saints, producing divisions in the church, was denominated a heresy during the three first centuries.

This does not prove those doctrines to be false which the churches condemned, because churches and councils are not infallible. But it does prove the opinions denominated heretical, to be novelties, and in opposition to the received opinion of the church until the time of their existence. The declaration of the primitive church that a doctrine is a heresy, is a public formal testimony, as to what had been until then, the received opinion of the churches.

* A writer of eminence, in a sermon from 1 Cor. xiii, 10, delivered at an ordination,† assumes without any attempt at exposition, or proof, that even the Apostles *knew but in part:* from which has resulted "diversity of opinion," and the fact, that, though of two opposite opinions, both cannot be true; "they may both be innocent:" and that this imperfection of knowledge may have been designed, "as a moral discipline," and "to give a larger scope, and new occasion, for the exercise of good feeling." It certainly would have been relevant and desirable, that it should have been ascertained whether this *conceded ignorance* of the apostles, respected doctrinal knowledge, or only experimental knowledge, begun in time, and to be consummated in heaven; the *latter,* seeming to be the subject of discourse, and not at all the former. Whether their *partial ignorance* of Christian doctrine, had respect to a *partial revelation* of the doctrines of Christianity, or to the doctrines which are revealed: If it respected revealed doctrines, whether their *ignorance* was owing to their indolence, or incapacity to understand, or to such obscurity in the revelation of them, that even apostles could understand only a part of the doctrines which God had revealed. We cannot but admire, if it were partial doctrinal knowledge, which is conceded by the Apostles, how they should have drawn inferences from the fact, so directly opposed to those which were drawn by this writer. The one, inferring charity and moderation; the other, the duty of contending earnestly for the faith. The one anathematising any man, or even an angel, who should preach any other gospel; and the other, inferring from the same premises, the equal innocence of doctrinal truth and doctrinal falsehood.

† *Dr. Ware's Sermon delivered at the ordination of the Rev. William B. O. Peabody, at Springfield,* 1820.

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The heretics themselves, admitted sometimes, that their opinions were novel, but nevertheless true; or more commonly, so explained them, as to claim that they were not a departure from the received faith. Uniting of course, the testimony of heretics, to that of the church, as to what had been the received opinion.

From the nature, then, and the known æra of the several heresies in the primitive church, we may ascertain what was the antecedent faith of the church, on the points to which they relate.

The doctrine of the Incarnation of Christ was, then, the received opinion of the church, when denied by the Gnostics, towards the close of the first century. The Divinity of Christ when denied by Arius A. D. 315. Soon after which, it was condemned as a heresy, in a council of 380 Fathers. The doctrines of original sin, entire depravity, regeneration by special grace, and justification by faith, continued to be the received doctrines of the church until the time of Pelagius about A. D. 400.

The doctrines of the evangelical system, then, commenced their journey down to us from the apostolic age: and as each doctrine of the liberal system encountered any one of them, *that*, was declared by the church to be a novelty, and the other the antecedently received opinion of the church. Can this fact be reconciled with the supposition that the liberal system, was the faith *first* delivered to the saints? Did all the churches from the beginning, misunderstand the import of the Gospels and epistles; and all the apostolic expositions of them; and misunderstand systematically wrong; and exactly alike, on all points; and in direct opposition to what Jesus Christ and the Apostles intended to teach; and this too, without concert, and throughout the Roman Empire? Or if the liberal was the system first delivered to the saints, could all the churches have exchanged it for the opposite system, so early, so silently, so unitedly, as to have the *whole truth* regarded as a novelty and denounced as a heresy in the second and third and fourth centuries. Dr. Priestly has attempted to show that the liberal system was that which was

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actually delivered by Christ and his Apostles to the saints, and that such a change as we have supposed, did happen in the progress of two or three hundred years. But beside the utter failure of his proof, he might as well have attempted to show, that the course of all the rivers in the Roman Empire was reversed during the three first centuries of the Christian æra, in opposition to the testimony of all the historians and naturalists of the empire, convened by public authority, on purpose to inquire into the matter of fact.

5. It is a point decided by inspiration, that the Martyrs who suffered under Pagan and Papal persecutions, held the same faith, and that the faith which they held, and for which they suffered, is the faith which was delivered to the saints. The apostle John saw in vision "under the altar, the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.* It is called in another place, "the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."† These are the Martyrs under Pagan Rome. But with reference to those who suffered afterwards, under Papal Rome, it is said: "Here is the patience of the saints: Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."‡ The faith, then, which the Martyrs held under Pagan and Papal Rome, and for which they suffered, was the same, and was the WORD OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS. But we know, by evidence unequivocal and undeniable, that the doctrinal opinions of the Martyrs under Papal Rome, were the doctrines of the evangelical system, and not those of the liberal system. They exist now upon historical records, and in public creeds; and are denominated the Doctrines of the Reformation. The Doctrines of the Reformation then, which we denominate the evangelical system, have the seal of heaven impressed upon them, as being the WORD OF GOD AND THE FAITH OF JESUS, THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS.

I am now to explain the manner, in which the Churches of our Lord should contend for the faith. And,

1. By a proper exercise of their civil influence.

* Rev. vi, 9. † Rev. xii, 17. ‡ Rev. xiv, 12.

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The rights and duties of Christians, as members of a civil community, are not, it is believed, generally understood. As in the first generations of New-England, every thing, almost, was done by civil government, to promote religion; the idea has descended, that, christians have *some influence* to exert, favorable to religion, through the medium of government: without the perception exactly, how it is to be done in the present altered state of things which exist. Christians now in their civil capacity, are members of a great empire, whose administration cannot be modified in accommodation to local religious purposes. A multitude of denominations of christians have arisen, also, each, upon principles of religious liberty, entitled to impartial protection; and excluding in behalf of any, governmental favoritism.—In this new state of things, christians are perplexed, and know not what to do. They are afraid to withhold their efforts, to benefit religion through the medium of government; and environed by difficulties and dangers, they are afraid to exert it. For my own satisfaction in the first instance, I have been led to investigate the subject; and though I have not found it unattended with difficulties, my mind rests in the following results.

1. Christians are not to attempt to control the administration of civil government, in things merely secular.

This is what our Savior refused to do, when he declined being a king, or ruler, or judge. It would secularise the church, as the same conduct, secularised the church of Rome:—and bring upon her, and justly, a vindictive reaction, of hatred and opposition. When great questions of national morality are about to be decided, such as the declaration of War; or as in England the abolition of the slave trade, or the permission to introduce christianity into India by Missionaries; it becomes christians to lift up their voice, and exert their united influence. But, with the annual detail of secular policy, it does not become christians to intermeddle, beyond the unobtrusive influence of their silent suffrage. They are not to "strive, nor cry, nor lift up their voice in the streets. The injudicious association of religion with politics, in the

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time of Cromwell, brought upon evangelical doctrine and piety in England, an odium which has not ceased to this day.

2. It is equally manifest, that christians should not attach themselves exclusively to any political party, or take a deep interest in political disputes.

No party is so exclusively right, as to render it safe, for any man, to commit his conscience to its keeping, and act implicitly according to its dictation. Nor can any party, in a popular government, be sufficiently secure from change, to render it safe, to identify with it, the interests of religion. Beside, if christians enter deeply into political disputes, they will be divided, and one denomination arrayed against another, in their prayers and efforts: and one christian against another, in the same church. A spirit of party zeal creates also a powerful diversion of interest and effort from the cause of Christ: creates prejudices in christians one against another: and in the community against the cause itself. Annihilates spirituality of mind; prevents a spirit of prayer, and efforts for revivals of religion: and renders christians the mere dupes, and tools, of unprincipled, ambitious men. No sight is more grievous or humiliating than to see christians continually agitated, by all the great and little political disputes of the nation, the state, the city, and town, and village, toiling in the drudgery of ambition, and flowing hither and thither like waves which have no rest, and cast up only mire and dirt. I am persuaded that there has been utterly a fault among christians in this thing; and that there is no one particular in which it is more important that there should be a reformation.

3. It is plain, also, that no attempt should be made by christians of one denomination, to hinder the prosperity of other denominations, by any monopoly of governmental influence and favor.

The end of heaven has been answered, in the powerful and direct aid given to the churches, by the civil fathers of New-England. Then, it was needed, to lay foundations, to form habits, to surmount obstacles, and to carry the churches through the wilderness. But now it is not needed, and can-

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not be bestowed, in the manner it has been. All denominations of christians must live now, by a general impartial favor of government, and their own efforts, the goodness of their cause, and the smiles of heaven. The *favoritism* of government in a free country is an advantage too precarious also, to be employed safely, by any denomination. For such is the instability of popular governments, that their partial aid if resorted to might exalt at one time, and abandon and persecute at another. All denominations have an equal interest now, in renouncing all attempts at securing the partial favor of government; and in insisting upon impartial protection and favor only.

Should any denomination however be so destitute of wisdom, as to attempt to propagate its opinions, and facilitate its progress, by a monopoly of literary influence, through governmental favor, and by rendering their own sentiments a passport to places of honor and trust, in the higher, and more subordinate stations of civil office and employment. If in these, and other ways, they should seek to give to themselves, by the adventitious favor of government, a weight in the community, and an influence on the public mind, favorable to their own religious views, and adverse to those of other denominations: in such case, civil and religious liberty would authorise and demand, that, all christians of other denominations, should withhold their suffrage from the ambitious sect, who had perverted and abused, the public confidence. This, by those who should experience the salutary admonition, would be deprecated, no doubt, as "*introducing religion into politics*" but it would in fact be, only a righteous effort to put *that religion out of politics* which they had unrighteously identified with them:—and to place the religious rights and privileges of christians, upon an equality. When this had been accomplished, persons of worth, of that denomination, exempt from such sectarian bias as would abuse the confidence reposed in them, might enjoy the public favor as before.

4. I cannot perceive that churches are bound in point of duty, or required on the ground of policy, to confine their

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suffrages exclusively, to persons of their own denomination, or to regulate them, exclusively, with reference to piety or doctrinal opinions.

There are certain guarantees of integrity, and of security to the general interests of religion, which as christians, we are bound to require. There must be such a belief in the being of God, and of accountability and future punishment, as lays a foundation for the practical influence of an oath: such exemption from immorality, as will render the elevated example of rulers safe to the interest of public morals: such general approbation of the christian religion, and its institutions, as will dispose them to afford to religion, the proper protection and influence of government: and such exemption from sectarian zeal, as will secure from abuse, the confidence of other denominations, and an administration impartial in its aspect upon all of them. But where these securities are given, I do not perceive that christians are forbidden to repose confidence in men, for civil purposes, who do not profess religion, or afford evidence of piety. Men of piety are doubtless to be preferred and greatly to be desired, other things being equal: but I cannot perceive, that the qualifications for civil trust, and for membership in the church, are the same: and wherever they have been so regarded, the consequence has been, the intrusion of unsanctified men by a lax examination, or by dispensing entirely with piety as a qualification for communion. As long as communion in the English church shall continue to be an indispensable qualification for office, so long will the tide of ambition roll through her interior, and damp the fire upon her altars. It was the mistake of our pious fathers in making the terms of communion and civil trust the same, which produced the lax mode of admission to the churches of New England, followed by the long and dreadful declension from evangelical doctrine and piety, which, in many churches continues to this day: and the same course persisted in would perpetuate the same effects.

What, then, is the ground, which the churches ought to take? It is the high ground of Christian temper, Christian principle, and Christian practice. It is a great mistake if any suppose,

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that their conduct in relation to things spiritual, may be regulated by one rule, and in things civil by another. The Gospel furnishes Christians with rules for their entire direction, in all things. In this respect, as well as others, the law of the Lord is perfect, and every man of God, is, by his Bible, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

Let christians, then, not under the influence of party zeal, but in the fear of God, as those who must give an account; withhold their suffrages from men whose known opinions destroy the practical influence of an oath; whose open hostility to all religion, renders it unsafe and sinful to confide in them; whose immoral habits would contaminate the public morality; or whose sectarian zeal, would incapacitate them for a liberal and impartial legislation on the subject of religion: and when this is done, let them no longer know "any man after the flesh:" but without reference to political party, or doctrinal creed, vote for those who are in other respects worthy of their confidence. Every community needs in its bosom, men of cool and uncommitted feeling, to allay the fierceness of party strife, and to come forth for the salvation of the nation, on emergencies of danger: and why should not an host of such men, lovers of their country and their God, be found in the church, instituted by heaven, to promote peace on earth and good will to men. The interest of science and literature, are regarded as too important to be identified with political parties; and are permitted to enjoy the retreat of the groves, far from the noise of strife and war: and why should not the interests of religion, be allowed to stand aloof from the conflicts of ambition, and the din of controversy? As political animosities rage, in free governments, and competitions for office and power are conducted, and ever will be, till the world is far better than it now is;—every christian may say of political partizans as Jacob said of Simeon and Levi. "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations: O, my soul, come not thou into their secret, unto their assembly mine honor, be not thou united."

The effect of such a retreat, by Christians, from the annual details of party strife, and of the silent exertion of

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evangelical influence in the exercise of the right of suffrage, would be attended with the happiest effects.

The political alienation of Christians would cease, and be followed by the increase of brotherly love. Their diversion from religious enterprise would cease, and they would have more time and more zeal for the service of Christ. The prejudice against religion, occasioned by their political officiousness, would be avoided; and that influence, which, before, was worse than lost in the turmoils of party, would be sanctified and devoted to the cause of Christ.

In all the competitions for political elevation, of which there will always be many in free governments; the suffrage of a Christian community, held in reserve, to be exercised under the influence of conscience, and a cool uncommitted discretion, would have an influence highly salutary to the state, and to the interests of piety and morality. As long as Christians are divided, and will vote blindly, under the influence of a political mania; no individual fears the consequence of irreligion, or immorality; and no party, fears the consequence in their candidates for office.

But if Christians retire from unhallowed competitions, to bestow their suffrage by the dictation of an enlightened conscience, they will hold an amount of suffrage, not to be lightly regarded or despised on either side. In this, there is no electioneering, no officious meddling, and no violence. Christians exercise their own civil rights, under the guidance of their own consciences, enlightened by the word of God; and in doing it, allay the violence of party, elevate the standard of morality, and secure to religion, all the protection that it needs, and to their country, so far as their influence can avail, an administration of the government, devoted to the public good, and not to the interests of a party. Experience has evinced the vanity of all hopes of religious and moral purity from the influence of civil governments directly: government itself, needs to be brought under the influence of Christian principle, and to be embued with Christian feeling: an event, which can be accomplished, only, as the public opinion shall be purified and regulated by religious and

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moral principle. But, this silent leaven of the mass, can be the result only, of a general increase of religion and the proper exercise by Christians of their civil influence. I would say therefore in the language of Wilberforce "Let true Christians then, with becoming earnestness, strive in all things to recommend their profession, and to put to silence the vain scoffs of ignorant objectors. Let them boldly assert the cause of Christ in an age when so many, who bear the name of Christians, are ashamed of Him; and let them consider as devolved on them the important duty of suspending for a while the fall of their country, and, perhaps, of performing a still more extensive service to society at large; not by busy interference in politics, *in which it cannot but be confessed there is much uncertainty;* but rather by that sure and radical benefit of restoring the influence of religion, and of raising the standard of morality. Let them cultivate a catholic spirit of universal good will, and of amicable fellowship towards all those, of whatever sect or denomination, who, differing from them in non-essentials, agree with them in the grand fundamentals of religion. Let them countenance men of real piety wherever they are found; and encourage in others every attempt to repress the progress of vice, and to revive and diffuse the influence of religion and virtue. Let their earnest prayers be constantly offered, that such endeavors may be successful, and that the abused long-suffering of God may still continue to us the invaluable privilege of vital Christianity."

2. The churches of our Lord are to maintain the faith delivered to the saints by inculcating it early, and earnestly upon children.

Catechetical instruction was adopted universally, by the primitive Christians; was practised by the Waldenses as their safeguard against the seductions of the Papists; was resorted to by the churches of the Reformation, and continued by the churches of New England; and has uniformly been followed by the revival or decline of religion, as it has been persisted in or neglected. It is pre-eminently important that there

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be in the church, symbols of evangelical doctrine, associated with the earliest recollections of her children.

The objection that children cannot understand the doctrines of the Bible, is unfounded. They can understand them, in their order, as early as they can understand any thing. The being and character of God, the doctrines of accountability, depravity and the necessity of a moral change, are comprehended by children early, and with great ease. But even, if they do not, at the time, understand the *words*, they commit to memory, will they never understand them, or derive benefit from them? Would any parent be willing to risk the commitment by his children of obscene songs, because, at the time, their import was not understood? Would not the words be a leaven of impurity in the memory, to contaminate the mind as it opened to the comprehension of their meaning? So the doctrines of the Bible, though deposited as a dead letter, may become a fountain of life to the soul, when it shall open the eye of its understanding upon them.

The plan of leaving children uninstructed in religion that they may come with an unbiassed mind to the subject, is impracticable. An evil heart, is, itself, a powerful bias against the truth. And if the servants neglect to sow good seed, the enemy will certainly sow tares. The sure consequence of leaving children to grow up without religious instruction, will be irreligion, and prejudice against the truth.

Whenever, therefore, our doctrinal catechisms are laid aside, a breach wide as the sea is opened for the enemy to come in.

3. The faith delivered to the saints must be maintained by means of literary institutions regulated and controlled by its sanctifying power.

It is evident, that the youth of our colleges cannot be governed, without efficient moral influence. In our free country neither military coersion, nor civil power, nor ambition will, alone, avail to subdue the vicious propensities and direct the principles and habits of the young. Moral influence must be employed; and the most powerful moral influence is that ex-

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erted by evangelical religion. This system of faith imposes a stricter rule of duty, and enforces its requisitions by more powerful sanctions, attended, when faithfully exhibited, by the influences of the Spirit giving them effect on the heart. The salutary influence of revivals, and of the beneficiaries of the churches in our colleges, in promoting among the young men generally, purity of morals, and increasing the facilities of government, are manifest and great.

Another proof of the necessity of such an influence is found in the destructive consequences of a perverted literature. Talents and learning are moral power; and cannot be arrayed against religion without disastrous effects. If these, then, are beheld chiefly in alliance with error, and the truth associated chiefly with uncultivated intellect, how great and powerful will be the prepossession in favor of error, and against the truth? We may as well expect the application of all the mechanical powers in the natural world, without effect, as of the energies of talent and literature in the moral world, without effect. A reliance on the power of God, in such circumstances, is presumption; for it supposes, in opposition to the declarations of his word and his providences, that he will protect by miracle without the use of means.

The opinion that God has dispensed with learning and talents as auxiliaries in the work of defending and propagating the faith, has been adopted hastily and without reason. The foolishness of preaching by which he saves, is not foolish preaching; and the weak things which he employs to confound the mighty are not uncultivated intellect and ignorance. The principal defenders of the faith in the Primitive Church were men of vigorous minds and extensive knowledge. The apostles could speak in every tongue; and, besides having been instructed by Christ, were, by the Holy Ghost, reminded of his words, and taught what to say. Augustine was, in his day, a host. Luther and Calvin were men of might. And the Reformers generally had the advantage of their antagonists in literature and science. That none should preach the gospel who have not had the advantages of a liberal education, we do not assert nor believe. But that such should be the

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ordinary qualifications of Ministers we do stedfastly believe.

Is it necessary to add, that, it is the duty of the Church universally, to withhold her sons from those literary institutions which are hostile to the doctrines of grace? It is ludicrous to pretend that "no doctrines in particular are taught" in such institutions; and that no influence is exerted to bias the minds of young men against the evangelical system. We might as well speak of a sword with no edge in particular, or a book containing no ideas in particular, as of religious instruction without any religious doctrines in particular. Besides, what shall we think of Churches associated on purpose to train up youth in the doctrines of Christianity, sending them where "no doctrines in particular are taught?" And is it true, can it without a miracle be true, that no influence is exerted in such institutions to pervert the minds of young men? Will the faculty, whose opinions are known and revered as they are wont to be by their pupils, and having in their hands the distribution of literary honors, have no influence in forming a popular sentiment hostile to the doctrines of the Reformation? Will this atmosphere of opposition and ridicule, in which a youth, whose previous education has been evangelical, is sent to live and move and have his being, exert no influence in unsettling his opinions? Possibly he may not make shipwreck of the faith; but is this a justification for exposing him to temptations which to nineteen in twenty will prove fatal? How many pious parents already weep over blasted hopes? How many children of the Church have, through the perversion of their talents and acquirements, become her most powerful adversaries? Were the evils confined to the unhappy victims, it would be deplorable: for what shall it profit a man if his son gain the highest point of literary attainment and renown, and lose his soul? But many parents of evangelical opinions, influenced by the example of Christians, may send their children who are not themselves beyond the reach of perversion. And all may have brothers, and sisters, and companions, and relatives, on whom they may exert a fatal influence, and thus be-

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some the instruments of an extended diversion of the public opinion.

4. The faith delivered to the saints, is to be contended for by a faithful exhibition of its sanctions.

These, are contained in the punishment threatened to the rejection of truth, as a crime; and the calamities inseparable from the rejection of it, if it were not a crime. The doctrines of revelation are not articles of speculation merely, but principles of moral government. They disclose the law, the Gospel, and the providence of God. They are declared also, to be so plain, that they can no more be misunderstood, innocently, than darkness can be mistaken innocently for light, bitter for sweet, thorns for grapes, thistles for figs, tares for wheat, or ashes for bread. But if there were no criminality attached to the rejection of the truth, the calamities of rejecting it, would be the same, as if its rejection were criminal. If we could separate criminality from sin, it would still be a principle of misery. Enmity against God, malevolence, envy, revenge, intemperance, and lust, are sources of misery, if they were not crimes; and thus it is with fundamental error in doctrine. The character, law, Gospel, and providence of God, are realities, as unmodified by human opinion, as the laws of the natural world: and the calamity of adopting false opinions on these subjects, and of opposition of heart to the true character and government of God, is the same in its consequences as a calamity, whether it be criminal or not. To be carnally minded, in either case, is death. He that goes into eternity, in a state of opposition to the character and government of God, is undone, whether guilty or not guilty.

It is an admitted fact, that, repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, are some how, indispensable to render it consistent for God to pardon sin. But this repentance, and this faith, are definite realities, and if a mistake were not criminal, *that* which is not repentance, cannot have the *effect* of repentance, and *that* which is not faith, cannot have the *effect* of faith, in rendering it consistent for God to pardon sin; however innocently the mistake may come to pass. Beside, men as sinners, must be sanctified, as well as par-

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doned, to fit them for heaven. But their sanctification must be accomplished, not by physical power exclusively, but by the instrumentality of the truth. It no more belongs to omnipotence to give to error, the effect of truth, on the minds of free agents, than to cause a thing to be, and not to be, at the same time. A law without rewards or punishments, cannot *be made* as influential on moral beings, as a law with sanctions, at all more than vacuity in the scales, can *be made* as weighty as lead. Thou shalt kill cannot be *made* to have the same effect, as the prohibition, "thou shalt not kill." And "the soul that sinneth it shall" not "die," cannot be *made* to affect the mind of a sinner, like the denunciation "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." In like manner, the declarations, "The carnal mind is" *not* "enmity against God;" "if a man be" *not* "born again, he shall see the kingdom of God;" "he that doth" *not* "repent and believe, shall be saved;" and he that is" *without* "holiness, shall see the Lord;" "and he that doth" *not* "deny himself, shall be a disciple of Christ;" cannot be made to have the same effect in exciting fear, or producing conviction of sin, or repentance, or faith, as the contrary declarations. It is idle to talk of the power of God, or of the goodness of God, or of the mercy of God, or of his paternal character; we may as well rely on these attributes to prevent the effects of fire, or water, or poison, on the natural body. We may as well play with the adder, or meet the hungry lion, or leap the precipice, or stand before the cannon's mouth, confiding in God's goodness and our sincerity to prevent harm, as to disregard or oppose all the great laws of his moral government, and our moral nature, and expect that his power and goodness will avert the consequences, and save us without the truth, or by the instrumentality of error. Believing, then, as we do, that the evangelical system is the faith delivered to the saints, *the very gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:* and that the rejection of it is fatal, on the ground of crime, and fatal in the nature of things, as moral beings are constituted, we are bound to preach this gospel, as, in our opinion, indispensable to salvation.

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We are bound to do this, because to do otherwise, would be to preach the gospel without sanctions: which would render it of none effect. We are bound to do it also, because, as men are constituted, *opinion* has influence, and we owe its efficacy to Christ, and to the souls of men. The gospel, if it had been preached without sanctions, by Christ and his Apostles would have excited little opposition, and have done little good. The Scribes and Pharisees would not have been offended at Christ, but would have admired his Catholic spirit, if to his doctrine he had subjoined; "These are my opinions—but those who differ from me, are doubtless honest and sincere, and will be mercifully accepted by our heavenly father." Idolaters, also, would have added Christ, as a God, to their thirty thousand gods, if he in return, would have given to each, and his worshippers, the right hand of fellowship. So it is, precisely, in respect to the doctrines of the evangelical system. "*Charity*" would "*suffer long*" and be as "*kind*" to us, as to Mahommedans, or infidels, or the diversities of liberal men; if the concession could only be made by us, that those who reject these doctrines, may be innocently and safely wrong. It is holding them as essential to salvation, and all opposite systems as fatal, that overcomes the patience of *charity itself*, and bring upon us, the retribution of invective and obloquy. All this however only discloses the efficacy upon the consciences of men, of preaching the truth with its sanctions: and increases our obligations, and our motives, to do it faithfully.

I would not incumber the subject here, with the question, what will become of the heathen, if the faith delivered to the saints be essential to salvation? For if it were true, that those to whom it has not been delivered, may be saved without it; it would not follow, that those can be, to whom it has been delivered, and by whom it has been rejected.

Nor is it needful to adjust the seeming, or real differences, of those Christians, who hold, some to more, and others to less of the system. For the question is not, *how much of this system* may be misunderstood, consistently with sanctification by that which is still embraced—but can it be re-

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jected entirely, by those who possess the Bible, and they who do it, be sanctified without it, and saved by the instrumentality of error. Nor is it a question of any consequence whether it be *possible* for a man to be saved, who rejects this system, if it be in fact, as we believe it to be, the Gospel. For what if it were possible for a man who rejects it, to be saved, does that prove that he will be saved? And do we need no higher evidence that we shall be saved, than is implied in the fact of its bare possibility?

Nor is the duty of preaching this faith as indispensable to salvation, affected at all, by the consideration that we are fallible, and may possibly be mistaken in our opinions: For, so long as we believe, whether correctly or not, we must act according to our belief. Nor is this setting in the judgment seat, and "dealing damnation round the land," at all more than our believing certain human productions to be the laws of the state, and that some men have transgressed them, and will be punished, is dealing damnation round the land.

Nor is it bigotry. Bigotry consists in a blind attachment to opinions, from inclination, passion, and prejudice, and may be manifested in as high a degree, in the avowal and propagation of liberal, as evangelical opinions.

Neither can I perceive in what respect it is uncharitable. For what is charity? Not a decision of the understanding, but an affection of the heart. It is *love—good will—benevolence.*—But while it leads us to hope, as long as there is room to hope, that a fellow creature is not guilty, and in danger, it does not lead us to resist competent evidence of the fact, or to conceal from him, our opinion of his character, or our sense of his danger. The more we love him, the more plain will be our note of admonition, the more earnest our intreaty, and the more vigorous our exertion, to save a soul from death. Charity, does not consist in creeds of strict, or liberal import: but in the temper of heart, with which they are adopted, and propagated. It is very possible, that a liberal creed, may be associated with a haughty and vindictive temper; and what is called a severe creed, with the meekness and gentleness of Christ.

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"Charity suffereth long and is kind" *under severe provocations.* "Envieth not" *a successful competitor for popular favor.* "Vaunteth not itself;" *does not trumpet its own virtues and praises.* "Is not puffed up" *with vain self-estimation.* "Doth not behave itself unseemly" *by a light, and vain deportment.* "Seeketh not her own;" *has no pleasure in monopolies.* "Is not easily provoked" *by the perverseness of men.* "Thinketh no evil," *plotteth none —suspecteth none.* "Rejoiceth not in iniquity;" *as if the means could sanctify the end.* But "rejoiceth in the truth," *as having to do with the affections.* "Beareth all things;" *revilings and misrepresentations with meekness.* "Believeth all things" *just as they are revealed, as those knew all things who had an unction from the Holy One.* "Endureth all things;" *temptations with fortitude, afflictions with submission.*

5. The faith delivered to the saints is to be defended by earnest written discussion.

The opinion that controversy is of no use because disputants never convince each other, is derived from a very limited view of the subject. It is nearer the truth to say, that no great advance has been made in science, religion, or politics, without controversy; and certain it is that no æra of powerful theological discussion has ever past away, without an abiding effect in favor of truth. The discussions of Augustine, Luther and Calvin are felt to this day; and the controversial writings of Edwards have been to error, what the mounds and dykes of Holland have been to the sea.

One danger only is to be guarded against, it is that of diminishing, in the public mind, the high sense which has existed of the criminality and danger of error. If our personal attachments, and literary friendships, and courtesy of manner, should bring down the high and holy subject of contending for the faith, to a cool and amicable trial of classical and polemical skill; the public feeling would soon be chilled, and fall to this low level of practical estimation. Every discussion of the doctrines of Christianity should be conducted with benevolence evidently, but in a language and in a manner which carries home to the hearts of

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men, the full impression of our deep conviction, both of the criminality and the danger of rejecting the truth.

6. Another means of defending the faith, is to be found in a careful maintenance of the apostolic tenure of membership in the visible church.

This, there is no reason to doubt, consisted in a credible profession of repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And as long as these continued to be the terms of admission, the primitive churches continued in a healthful state. But when, as a matter of courtesy or of authority, the tenure of membership was altered, after the protection and control of civil government began; a door was opened at which the state entered, unsanctified, the church of God, and in the progress of ages, reared the most terriffic despotism of superstition and ambition, that ever provoked God or oppressed men.

At the reformation the same interposition of government modified the terms of admission, and by the secular and unsanctified mass thrown upon the church, hindered its consummation, and prepared the way for that swift and great declension from evangelinal doctrine and vital godliness which followed.

When our fathers came to this land in their flight from persecution, it was primarily that they might build the church, according to the evangelical pattern, of lively stones only; and in the beginning the tenure of membership was a professed belief in the doctrines of the reformation, attended by credible evidence of regeneration. This strict tenure of membership, about the close of the first generation, became a subject of complaint, by those who were excluded from office, because they could not conscientiously join the church, and by those whose children on the same account remained unbaptized, and by emigrants from England of less strictness of religious sentiment, who came over after the first perils of settlement were past. These united, constituted a strong party in the State who were for admitting all persons of a regular life to full communion, on their making a profession of their belief in the christian religion, without any inquiry with respect to a change of heart; and for regarding all who

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had been baptized in infancy, as, on that ground, entitled in adult age to membership in the church. The legislators generally favored the liberal side of the question, and some ministers. The innovation was however strenuously resisted by the rest of the clergy, and by the churches almost universally. While hosts without assembled, and murmurs long and loud were heard, they stood to defend the gates of Zion from the intrusion of the stranger. At length, however, they were overpowered by numbers. The gates of the holy city were burst open, and the world rushed in, and took possession of the baptismal water and the sacramental host. Thus at a stroke was prostrated the system of church organization established by heaven to perpetuate pure doctrine and vital piety; and from this time for three quarters of a century, both declined in a manner the most rapid and alarming which the churches of New-England ever witnessed.

In the course of ten years after this event, a suspension of divine influence took place, in the conviction and conversion of sinners so signal and alarming, as induced the legislature to call a Synod to inquire into and report the causes. The alarm was great, and the lamentations loud and many. Mr. Stoughton in an election Sermon 1660 said, "Alas, how is New-England in danger this day to be lost: even in New-England; to be buried in its own ruins! How sadly may we lament that all are not *Israel* that are *now* of Israel! How is the good grain diminished and the chaff increased!" In 1683; the Minister of Weymouth declared that "A great failure has taken place in the work of conversion, in the frequency of a credible profession of religion, and in the tokens of formality hypocrisy and apostasy." Dr. Increase Mather says 1697, that "Dr Owen has proved, that, the letting go, by the primitive churches of the principle, that, particular churches ought to consist of regenerate persons only, brought in the great antichristian apostasy." In the year 1700, he predicted, that, if the begun declension, (occasioned by the admission of unrenewed men into the church,) should continue to progress for thirty years to come, as it had done for thirty years past; the more conscientious people, would be

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constrained to gather churches out of churches. A prediction, which was extensively verified, in about that time. This suspension of divine influence, and decline of vital religion, continued until the time of Edwards, the Luther of New-England, who by his example, and by his unanswerable treatise, on the terms of communion, revived the practice of receiving to the communion none but those, who furnished credible evidence of a moral renovation by the spirit, and of repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. A practice, which, has been steadily increasing, from his day to this; and with it, evangelical doctrine, and revivals of religion.

By this course of ample experiment, in the primitive church, at the reformation, and in New-England; the point is settled, that, evangelical doctrines, cannot be maintained in the churches of our Lord, but by maintaining the apostolic tenure of membership. Let men of the world be amalgamated with the pious, in the church, and soon evangelical opinions will be exiled, or remain only in her creed a dead letter.

In the application of this subject we invite the attention of those, to what has been advanced in this discourse, whose minds have been unsettled and perplexed, in respect to the claims of the liberal and evangelical systems, to be regarded as the faith delivered to the saints: or, who have been accustomed to regard the latter system, as unintelligible, contradictory, absurd, and of no salutary practical influence.

We are sensible, that, in our land, there are many, who have no opportunity of hearing the evangelical system of doctrines stated and defended, in a manner which its advocates would approve: and that, no small prejudice has arisen against it, through misapprehension. But with his Bible in his possession, we are constrained to believe, that, every man may know what the Scriptures say on these subjects, and that, if the evangelical system be divine, it cannot be rejected with impunity. If, to any, this opinion shall seem severe, and as some have said, as if we were *glad* that many will be lost; we can say with an Apostle, and call God to witness, that we have great heaviness and continual sorrow in our

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hearts, for our brethren our kinsmen according to the flesh;* whom, as we understand the Bible, we cannot but regard as fatally deceived.

If the effects of their mistake were in our view, confined to this transient scene; or, if we could believe, that, the truth of God as a whole, could be misunderstood, and rejected, consistently with that moral renovation of the heart, which is indispensable to communion with God, and admission to heaven; we might hold our peace: for of what possible consequence can it be to us, whether our fellow men agree with, or differ from us on points, which, in a few days, may be of no consequence. Time is too short, and eternity is too long, to justify great solicitude, about things which affect us only here. But if, as we believe, all the qualifications for heaven have ceased from the heart of man, and all the means of their restoration, lie in the system of revealed truth, and the efficacy given to it by the special influence of the Holy Spirit, and that God will not sanctify by the instrumentality of error, where his truth is rejected in the presence, or within the reach of ample evidence: how can we, in such circumstances, behold our fellow men, our friends, and neighbors, moving onward to the confirmed state of a miserable eternity, and not be deeply affected. We beseech you, brethren, by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, that you be not offended with our plainness, in this discourse, nor with our importunity in its application. We repectfully, but earnestly, invite your attention to the argument, which has been submitted to your consideration; and intreat, that in the light of it, and of God's holy word, you will give to your own opinions one revision more: one *careful, prayerful, immediate revision:* for if you are wrong, it will soon be too late to retrieve the mistake. Allow me to ask you then, affectionately—solemnly, whether such collateral evidence, as we have been able to lay into the scale of evangelical exposition, can be the result of accident, or can be found, to be laid in the opposite scale? Are the doctrines of the liberal system, contained in the text, according to its

* Rom. ix, 1, 2.

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most direct, and obvious meaning? Do they receive the sanction of approbation, from the most devout persons, and the sentence of condemnation from the irreligious and vicious? Does the liberal system produce the same objections, which the faith produced, as delivered to the saints? Is it gladly received by the common people, and rejected by the same sort of men in the higher orders of society, as rejected the Gospel? Do the doctrines of the liberal system, occasion a virulent hostility against them, in such circumstances, as show that it does not result from the ardent love of truth, or hatred of error? Do they occasion the same fears and anxieties about a future state; the same deep conviction of sin, and the same joyful and often sudden conversion to God, as are manifested under evangelical preaching, and in revivals of religion? Do the doctrines of the liberal system, produce revivals of religion at all; and not rather, awaken prejudices, and array influence against them. Do they produce the same style of piety; as deep, solemn, ardent, as the faith produced, which was delivered to the saints? Do they inspire the same solicitude and effort for the awakening and conversion of sinners, under the light of the gospel; or the same compassion for the heathen, and enterprise for their salvation. Does the liberal system inspire the same assurance of its being true, attended by the same unwavering constancy in its profession, which the faith delivered to the saints inspired, and do they produce the same assurance of hope, and the same sustaining joy "full of glory" in the hour of death.

We make the appeal to your consciences and your hearts, whether you do not perceive and know, that the liberal system is naked in respect to these great effects, which the faith delivered to the saints, did produce: and whether, all of them, do not with undeniable notoriety, cluster about the path of the evangelical system. If this be so, can that system be false, which produces the effects, so many, and so great, which were produced by the faith delivered to the saints: and can that be the true faith, which is so utterly destitute of them? The Gospel, is the most powerful moral cause, which has ever operated in this world. Its effects of course cannot be hid, and cannot be the same, with a system in direct opposi-

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tion to it. The three or four first centuries, brought out unequivocally, the effects of the faith delivered to the saints which we have noted: these, all of them, are found associated still, with the evangelical system: and none of them with the liberal system. Is, then, the liberal system, the faith once delivered to the saints? Why does it not produce the same effects which that produced? Has the Gospel changed its nature, or lost its power, or has the human nature changed: or—is the liberal system another Gospel. Ponder well this subject for the judge is at the door, and the day will burst upon us soon, that will try every man's faith, and heart, and work.

Allow us then, once more to refer it to your consciences, whether, allowing the evidence from exposition to be on each side the same, this decisive weight of collateral evidence, ought not to withdraw your confidence from the liberal system, and to decide your judgment in favor of the evangelical system, as the very "word of God, and faith of Jesus" Every great system of truth and falsehood, is attended by a mass of presumptive collateral evidence, for or against it. And while the evangelical system commends itself to your confidence by all that variety of collateral evidence which has been exhibited, and the opposite system is wholly unattended by it; dare you, will you, reject the evangelical, and risk your salvation on the liberal system?

Does the thought, as you read, offer to rise, "Possibly, after all, my own system may be a deception, and that which I have disputed be true." Let it arise: for it may be the movement on your mind, of the long resisted spirit, suggesting to your conscience, "this is the way, walk ye in it."

Does fear flash across your mind, at times, the thought, as a momentary reality, "I may be wrong after all, and these doctrines which produce revivals of religion, and such joy in death, may be the faith delivered to the saints." Stifle not the unwelcome conviction, for it may be the commencement of eternal life in your soul. "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

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3.

SERMON

ON THE

REPENTANCE OF THE UNCHASTE WOMAN;

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL FRENCH

OF THE

REV. JAMES SAURIN,

Pastor of the French Church at the Hague.

BY ROBERT ROBINSON.

Peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God.....St. Peter.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE

REPORT

OF THE MINISTERIAL LABOURS

COMMUNICATED TO THE

Boston Society for Religious Purposes,

BY WILLIAM COLLIER,

AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 1823.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY JAMES G. BOLLES, AT THE WATCHMAN OFFICE,
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PREFACE.

THE design of this publication is to call the attention of the rulers of the people, and citizens of high standing in this Metropolis, to one of the greatest evils with which any country can be afflicted. And, if greatness of thought, force of reasoning, brilliancy of imagination, splendour of eloquence and ardency of devotion can interest an enlightened and virtuous community, *Saurin's Sermon on the repentance of the unchaste woman* will not fail to produce that effect. It is recommended, particularly so, to parents and guardians of youth, and all good citizens, in the confident hope that we shall all remember the *truth* of one assertion in the sermon; for God is righteous, that "ONE SUCH HOUSE suffered in a city is enough to draw down the curse of heaven on a whole province, a whole kingdom."

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SERMON.

THE REPENTANCE OF THE UNCHASTE WOMAN.

LUKE vii. 36—50.

And one of the pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed *them* with the ointment. Now when the pharisee which had bidden him, saw it, he spake within himself, saying, this man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman *this is* that toucheth him; for she is a sinner. And Jesus, answering, said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, master, say on. There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him, began to say within themselves, who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.

LET me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great: but let me not fall into the hand of man, 2 Sam. xxiv. 14. This was the request that David made, in the most unhappy moment of his life. A prophet sent by an avenging God came to bring him a choice of afflictions, *I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me*, ver. 12, &c.

What a proposal was this to a man accustomed to consider heaven as a source of benedictions and favours! Henceforth he was to consider it only as a cavern of thunder and lightning, flashing and rolling and ready to strike him dead! which of these punishments will he choose? Which of them could he choose without reproaching himself in future that he had chosen the worst? Which would you have chosen had you been in his place, my brethren? Would

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you have determined for war? Could you have borne the bare idea of it? Could you have endured to see the once victorious armies of Israel led in triumph by an enemy, the ark of the Lord a captive, a cruel and barbarous soldiery reducing a kingdom to ashes, razing fortresses, ravaging a harvest, and destroying in a moment the hope of the whole year? Would you have determined for famine? Would you have chosen to have *the heaven* become as *iron, and the earth brass*, the seed dying in the earth, or the corn burning before it was ripe. *The locust eating what the palmer worm hath left, and the canker worm eating what the locust hath left*, Joel, i. 4. men snatching bread from one another's hands, struggling between life and death, and starving till food would afford no nourishment? Would you have chosen mortality? Could you have reconciled yourselves to the terrible times in which contagion on the wings of the wind carries its deadly poison with the rapidity of lightning from city to city, from house to house; a time in which social living is at an end, when each is wholly employed in guarding himself from danger, and hath no opportunity to take care of others; when the father flees from the sight of the son, the son from that of the father, the wife avoids the husband, the husband the wife; when each dreads the sight of the person he most esteems, and receives, and communicates poisonous and deadly infection? These are the dreadful punishments out of which God required guilty David to choose one. These he was to weigh in a balance, while he agitated the mournful question, which of the three shall I choose for my lot? However, he determines, *Let me fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercies are great: but let me not fall into the hand of man.* He thought, that immediate strokes from the hand of a God, merciful though displeased, would be most tolerable. He could conceive nothing more terrible than to see between God and himself men, who would intercept his looks, and who would prevent his access to the throne of grace.

My brethren, the wish of David under his consternation may direct ours in regard to all the spots that have defiled our lives. True, the eyes of God are infinitely more pure than those of men. He indeed discovers frailties in our lives, which have escaped our notice, and *if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart.* It is true, he hath punishments to inflict on us infinitely more dreadful than any mankind can invent, and if men can *kill the body, God is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* However, this Almighty God, this terrible, this avenging God is a merciful God, *great are his tender mercies:* but men, men are cruel, yea, the very men, who allow themselves to live in the most shameful licentiousness, men who have the most need of the patience of others, men who themselves deserve the most rigorous punishment, these very men are usually void of all pity for their fellows. Behold a famous example. The unchaste woman in the text experienced both, and by turns made trial of the judgment of God, and the judgment of men. But she met with a very different treatment. In Jesus Christ she found a very severe legislator, who left her awhile to shed tears, and very bitter tears; a legislator, who left her awhile to her own grief, and sat and saw her hair dishevelled, and her features distorted;

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but who soon took care to dry up her tears, and to address this comfortable language to her, *Go in peace.* On the contrary, in the hands of men she found nothing but barbarity and cruelty. She heard a supercilious pharisee, endeavour to arm against her the Redeemer of mankind, try to persuade him to denounce her sentence of death, even while she was repenting of her sins, and do his utmost to cause condemnation to flow from the very fountain of grace and mercy.

It is this instructive, this comfortable history, that we set before you to-day, and which presents *three* very different objects to our meditation, the conduct of the incontinent woman, that of the pharisee, and that of Jesus Christ. In the conduct of the woman, prostrate at the feet of our Saviour, you see the principal characters of repentance. In that of the pharisee you may observe the venom, that not unfrequently infects the judgments, which mankind make of one another. And in that of Jesus Christ you may behold free and generous emotions of pity, mercy and compassion. Let us enter into the matter.

I. Let us first observe the *incontinent woman*, now become a penitent. The question most controverted by interpreters, and very differently answered by them, is that, which in our opinion is the least important, that is, who was this woman? Not that a perfect knowledge of her person, and the history of her life, would not be very proper, by explaining the nature of her sins, to give us a just idea of her repentance, and so contribute to elucidate the text: but because, though we have taken a great deal of pains, we have found nothing on this article worthy to be proposed to critical hearers, who insist upon being treated as rational men, and who refuse to determine a point without evidence.

I know, some expositors, misled by a resemblance between this anointing of Jesus Christ, and that mentioned in the eleventh chapter of St. John, when our Saviour supped with Lazarus, have supposed that the woman here spoken of was the same Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who paid such a profound attention to the discourse of Jesus Christ, and who, according to the evangelist, *anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair.* And as other parts of the gospel speak of another *Mary called Magdalen*, some have thought that Mary the sister of Lazarus, Mary Magdalen, *out of whom* it is said, Jesus Christ had *cast seven devils*, and the woman of our text, were one and the same person.

We do not intend to enter on these discussions. It is sufficient to know, first, that the woman here in question lived in the city of Nain, which sufficiently distinguishes her from Mary the sister of Lazarus, who was of Bethany, and from Mary Magdalen, who probably was so called, because she was born at *Magdala*, a little town in the tribe of Manasseh. Secondly, the woman of our text was one of a bad life, that is to say, guilty of impurity. The original word signifies a *sinner.* This term sometimes signifies in scripture the condition of such as lived out of the covenant, and in this sense it is used in the epistle to the Galatians, where St. Paul calls pagans *sinners:* but the word is applied in Greek authors to those women,

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who were such as all the circumstances of our history engage us to consider this woman. Though it is easy to determine the sin of this woman in general, yet it is not so easy to determine the particular kind, whether it had been adultery, or prostitution, or only some one criminal intrigue. Our reflections will by turns regard each of these conditions. In fine, it is highly probable, both by the discourse of the pharisee, and by the ointment, with which this woman anointed the feet of Jesus Christ, that she was a person of some fortune. This is all I know on this sort of question. Should any one require more, I should not blush to avow my ignorance, and to recommend him to guides wiser than any I have the honour of being acquainted with, or to such as possess that, which in my opinion, of all the talents of learned men, seems to me least to be envied, I mean that of having fixed opinions on doubtful subjects unsupported by any solid arguments.

We will confine ourselves to the principal circumstances of the life of this *sinner;* and to put our observations into a kind of order we will examine first her grief—next, the Saviour to whom she applied—then, the love that inflamed her—and lastly, the courage, with which she was animated. In these four circumstances we observe four chief characters of repentance. First, Repentance must be lively, and accompanied with keen remorse. Our sinner weeps, and her tears speak the language of her heart. Secondly, Repentance must be wise in its application. Our sinner humbles herself at the feet of him, *who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. Thirdly, Repentance must be tender in its exercise, and acts of divine love must take place of the love of sin. Fourthly, Repentance must be bold. Our sinner surmounts all the scruples dictated by false honour, she goes into the house of the pharisee, and acknowledges her misconduct in the presence of all the guests, and was no more ashamed to disavow her former crimes than she had been to commit them.

We consider, in the repentance of this woman the *grief* with which she was penetrated. Repentance must be accompanied with keen remorse. It is the chief character of it. In whatever class of unchaste people this woman ought to be placed, whether she had been a common prostitute, or an adulteress, or whether being unmarried she had abandoned herself for once to criminal voluptuousness, she had too much reason to weep and lament. If she had been guilty of *prostitution*, she could not shed tears too bitter. Can any colours sufficiently describe a woman, who is arrived at such a pitch of impurity as to eradicate every degree of modesty; a woman letting herself out to infamy, and giving herself up to the highest bidder; one who publickly devotes herself to the greatest excesses, whose house is a school of abomination, whence proceed those detestable maxims, which poison the minds of men, and those infamous debaucheries, which infect the body, and throw whole families into a state of putrefaction? It is saying too little to affirm, that this woman ought to shed bitter tears at the recollection of her scandalous and dissolute life. The priests and magistrates, and people of Nain ought to have covered themselves in sackcloth

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and ashes for having tolerated such a house, for not having one spark of the zeal of *Phinehas the son of Eleazar*, Num. xxv. 11. For having left one stone upon another as a monument of the profligacy of the city, and for not having erased the very foundations of such a house, though they, who were employed in the business, had been buried in the ruins One such house suffered in a city is enough to draw down the curse of heaven on a whole province, a whole kingdom.

Rome, what a fair opportunity have I now to confound thee! Am I not able to produce in the sight of the whole world full proof of thy shame and infamy? Do not a part of thy revenues proceed from a tax on prostitution? Are not prostitutes of both sexes thy *nursing fathers, and nursing mothers;* is not the holy see in part supported, to use the language of scripture, by *the hire of a whore, and the price of a dog?* Deut. xxiii. 18. But alas! I should leave thee too much reason to retort. I should fear, you would oppose our excesses against your excesses. I should have too much reason to fear a wound by the dart shot at thee. I should tremble lest thou shouldst draw it smoking from thine own unclean heart, and lodge it in ours. O God! *teach my hands to day to war, and my fingers to fight.* My brethren, should access to this pulpit be forever forbidden to us in future; though I were sure this discourse would be considered as a torch of sedition intended to set all these provinces in a flame; and should a part of the punishment due to the fomenters of the crime fall upon the head of him who hath the courage to reprove it, I do, and I will declare, that the prosperity of these provinces can never, no never be well established, while such affronts are publickly offered to the majesty of that God, *who is of purer eyes than to behold evil,* Hab. i. 13. Ah! Proclaim no more fasts, convoke no more solemn assemblies, appoint no more publick prayers to avert the anger of heaven. *Let not the priests, the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, let them not say, spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach,* Joel ii. 17. All this exterior of devotion will be useless, while there are amongst us places publickly set apart for impurity. The filthy vapour, that proceeds from them, will ascend, and form a thick cloud between us and the throne of grace, a cloud, which the most ardent prayers cannot pierce through.

Perhaps our penitent had been guilty of *adultery.* What idea must a woman form of herself, if she have committed this crime, and considers it in its true point of light? Let her attentively observe the dangerous condition, into which she hath plunged herself, and to that which she is yet exposed. She hath taken for her model the woman described by Soloman, and who hath had too many copies in latter ages, that *strange woman in the attire of an harlot,* who is *subtle of heart, loud and stubborn, her feet abiding not in her house, now without, now in the streets, lying in wait at every corner,* and saying to such, *among the youth* as are *void of understanding, I have peace offerings with me, this day have I paid my vows. I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with fine linen of Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love, for the good man is not at home, he is gone a long journey, and will not*

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come home till the day appointed, Prov. vii. 5. &c. Is it necessary, think you, my brethren, to alter many of these descriptive expressions to give a likeness of the manners of our times?

Are not modern dissipations described in the perpetual motion of this *strange woman*, whose *feet abide not in her house*, who is *now without* in the country, then, *in the streets, and at every corner?* What are some curious, elegant and fashionable dresses, but *the attire of a harlot?* Are not the continual artifices, and accumulated dissimulations, which some people use to conceal future designs, or to cover past crimes, are not these features of this *subtle woman?* What are those pains taken to form certain parties of pleasure but features of this woman, who saith, *I have peace offerings with me, I have this day paid my vows, come let us solace ourselves with loves?* What are certain moments expected with impatience, managed with industry and employed with avidity, but features of this woman, who saith *to fools among the youths, the good man is not at home, nor will he come till the day appointed?*—I stop.—If the unchaste woman in the text, had been guilty of adultery, she had defiled the most sacred and inviolable of all connections. She had kindled discord in the family of him, who was the object of her criminal regard. She had given an example of impurity and perfidy to her children and her domestics, to the world and to the church. She had affronted in the most cruel manner the man, to whom she owed the tenderest attachment, and the most profound respect. She had covered her parents with disgrace, and provoked such as knew her debauchery to inquire from which of her ancestors she had received such impure and tainted blood. She had divided her heart and her bed with the most implacable enemy of her family. She had hazarded the legitimacy of her children, and confounded the lawful heir with a spurious offspring. Are any tears too bitter to expiate such an odious complication of crimes? is any quantity too great to shed to wash away such guilt as this?

But we will not take pains to blacken the reputation of this penitent: we may suppose her unchaste, as the evangelist leads us to do, without supposing her an adulteress or a prostitute. She might have fallen *once*, and only once. Her sin, however, even in this case must have become a perpetual source of sorrow, thousands and thousands of sad reflections must have pierced her heart. Was this the only fruit of my education? Is this all I have learned from the many lessons that have been given me from my cradle, and which seem so proper to guard me forever against the rocks where my feeble virtue has been shipwrecked? I have renounced the decency of my sex, the appurtenances of which always have been timidity, scrupulosity, delicacy and modesty. I have committed one of those crimes, which, whether it be justice or cruelty, mankind never forgive. I have given myself up to the unkindness and contempt of him, to whom I have shamefully sacrificed my honour. I have fixed daggers in the hearts of my parents, I have caused that to be attributed to their negligence, which was occasioned only by my own depravity and folly. I have banished myself forever from the company of prudent persons. How can I bear their looks? Where can I find a night dark enough to conceal me from their sight?

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Thus might our mourner think; but to refer all her grief to motives of this kind would be to insult her repentance. She hath other motives more worthy of a penitent. This heart, the heart that my God demanded with so much condescension and love, I have denied him, and given up to voluptuousness. This body, which should have been a *temple of the Holy Ghost*, is become the den of an impure passion. The time and pains I should have employed in the work of my salvation, I have spent in robbing Jesus Christ of his conquests. I have disputed with my Saviour the souls he redeemed with his blood, and what he came to save I have endeavoured to sink in perdition. I am become the cause of the remorse of my accomplice in sin, he considers me with horror, he reproaches me with the very temptations, to which he exposed me, and when our eyes meet in a religious assembly, or in the performance of a ceremony of devotion, he tacitly tells me, that I made him unworthy to be there. I shall be his executioner on his death bed, perhaps I shall be so through all eternity. I have exposed myself to a thousand dangers, from which nothing but the grace of God hath protected me, to a thousand perils and dreadful consequences, the sad and horrible examples of which stain all history. Such are the causes of the tears of this penitent. *She stood at the feet* of Jesus Christ *weeping, and washed his feet with tears.* This is the first character of true repentance, it consists in part in keen remorse.

Repentance must be *wise* in its application. Our sinner did not go to the foot of mount Sinai, to seek for absolution under pretence of her own righteousness, and to demand justification as a reward due to her works. She was afraid, as she had reason to be, that the language of that dreadful mountain proceeding from the mouth of divine justice would pierce her through. Nor did she endeavour to ward off the blows of justice by covering herself with superstitious practices. She did not say, *wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Micah vi. 7. She did not even require priests and Levites to offer propitiatory services for her. She discerned the sophisms of errour, and acknowledged the Redeemer of mankind under the veils of infirmity and poverty, that covered him. She knew, that *the blood of bulls and of goats* could not purify the conscience. She knew that Jesus sitting at table with the pharisee was the only offering, the only victim of worth sufficient to satisfy the justice of an offended God. She knew that he was *made unto* sinners *wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*: that his *name* was the only one *among men whereby they might be saved.* It was to Jesus Christ that she had recourse, bedewing with tears the feet of him who was about to shed his blood for her, and receiving by an anticipated faith the benefit of the death, that he was going to suffer, she renounced dependance on every kind of satisfaction except his.

The third character of the repentance of this sinner is *love.* It

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shall seem, Jesus Christ, would have us consider all her actions as evidences of love, rather than as marks of repentance. *She hath loved much.* These things are not incompatible. Though *perfect love casteth out fear*, yet it doth not cast out grief, for the pardon of sin received by an elect soul, far from diminishing the regret which it feels for committing it, contributes to augment it. The more we love God, the greater the pain felt for offending him. Yea, this love that makes the happiness of angels, this love that inflames seraphims, this love that supports the believer under the most cruel torments, this love is the greatest punishment of a penitent. To have offended the God we love, a God rendered amiable by infinite perfections, a God so tender, so compassionate as to pardon the very sins we lament; this love excites in a soul such emotions of repentance as we should labour in vain to express, unless your hearts, in concert with our mouths, feel in proportion as we describe.

Courage is the fourth character of the repentance, or, if you will, the love of this woman. She doth not say, *What will they say of me?* Ah, my brethren, how often hath this single consideration, *What will they say of me?* been an obstacle to repentance! How many penitents have been discouraged, if not prevented by it! To say all in one word, how many souls hath it plunged into perdition! Persons affected by this, though urged by their consciences to renounce the world and its pleasures, have not been able to get over a fear of the opinions of mankind concerning their conversion. Is any one persuaded of the necessity of living retired? This consideration, *What will be said of me?* terrifies him. It will be said, that I choose to be singular, that I affect to distinguish myself from other men, that I am an enemy to social pleasure. Doth any one desire to be exact in the performance of divine worship? This one consideration, *What will they say of me?* terrifies. They will say, I affect to set myself off for a religious and pious person, I want to impose on the church by a specious outside; they will say, I am a weak man, full of fancies and phantoms. Our penitent breaks through every worldly consideration. "She goes," said a modern author, "into a strange house, without being invited, to disturb the pleasure of a festival by an ill-timed sorrow, to cast herself at the feet of the Saviour, without fearing what could be said, either of her past life, or of her present boldness, to make by this extraordinary action a publick confession of her dissoluteness and to suffer, for the first punishment of her sins, and for a proof of her conversion, such insults as the pride of the pharisees, and her own ruined reputation would certainly draw upon her." We have seen the behaviour of the penitent; now let us observe the judgment of the pharisee, *If this man were a prophet, he would have known who, and what manner of woman that is that toucheth him, for she is a* woman of bad fame.

II. The evangelist expressly tells us, that *the pharisee who thus judged*, was the person at whose table Jesus Christ was eating. Whether he were a disciple of Jesus Christ, as is very probable, and as his calling Christ *master* seems to import, or whether he had

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invited him for other reasons, are questions of little importance and we will not now examine them. It is certain, our Saviour did often eat with some pharisees, who far from being his disciples were the most implacable enemies of his person and doctrine. If this man were a disciple of Jesus Christ, it should seem very strange that he should doubt the divinity of the mission of Christ, and inwardly refuse him even the quality of a prophet. This pharisee was named Simon, however nothing obliges us either to confound Simon the pharisee with Simon the leper, mentioned in Matthew, and to whose house Jesus Christ retired, or the history of our text with that related in the last mentioned place, for the circumstances are very different, as it would be easy to prove, had we not subjects more important to propose to you Whoever this pharisee might be, he said within himself, *This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who, and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.* There are four defects in this judgment—a criminal indolence—an extravagant rashness—an intolerable pride—an anti-christian cruelty. As we cannot help condemning the opinion of the pharisee for these four defects, so we cannot avoid censuring most of the judgments, that people form on the conduct of their neighbours for the same reasons.

A criminal indolence. That disposition of mind, I allow, is very censurable, which inspires a perpetual attention to the actions of our neighbours, and the motive of it is sufficient to make us abhor the practice. We have reason to think, that the more people pry into the conduct of their neighbours, the more they intend to gratify the barbarous pleasure of defaming them: but there is a disposition far more censurable still, and that is to be always ready to form a rigorous judgment on the least appearances of impropriety, and without taking pains to enquire, whether there be no circumstances that diminish the guilt of an action apparently wrong, nothing that renders it deserving of patience or pity. It doth not belong to us to set ourselves up for judges of the actions of our brethren, to become inquisitors in regard to their manners, and to distribute punishments of sin and rewards of virtue. At least, when we usurp this right, let us not aggravate our conduct by the manner, in which we exercise the bold imperious usurpation. Let us not pronounce like iniquitous judges on the actions of those sinners, to whom nature, society, and religion ought to unite us in an affectionate manner. Let us procure exact informations of the causes of such criminals as we summon before our tribunals, and let us not deliver our sentences till we have weighed in a just balance whatever tends to condemn, or to absolve them. This would bridle our malignity. We should be constrained to suspend for a long time our avidity to solicit, and to hasten the death of a sinner. The pleasure of declaring him guilty would be counterbalanced by the pain of trying the cause. Did this pharisee give himself time to examine the whole conduct of the *sinner*, as he called her? Did he enter into all the discussions necessary to determine whether she were a *penitent* sinner, or an *obstinate* sinner? whether she were reformed, or hardened like a reprobate in the practice of sin? No certainly. At the

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sight of the woman he recollects only the crimes, of which she had been guilty; he did not see her, and he did not choose to see her in any other point of light; he pronounced her character rashly, and he wanted Jesus Christ to be as rash as himself, *this is a woman of bad fame.* Do you not perceive, my brethren, what wicked indolence animated this iniquitous judge, and perverted his judgment.

The pharisee sinned by rashness. See how he judges of the conduct of Christ in regard to the woman, and of what the woman ought to expect of Jesus Christ, on supposition his mission had been divine, *this man, if he were a prophet would have known who, and what manner of woman* this is *that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.* This opinion supposes, that a prophet ought not in any case to have patience with a woman of this sort. As if it were impossible for a prophet to have any design impenetrable to the eye of a pharisee! As if any one had a right to censure the conduct of a man under the direction of the infinite Spirit! But it is because this man is a prophet, it is because he is more than a prophet, it is because he is the spring, the ocean, from which all the prophets derived the supernatural knowledge of the greatest mysteries of revelation, of predicting events the least likely to come to pass, of seeing into the most distant and impenetrable futurity; it is because of this, that he is capable of forming a just notion of the character of a sinner, and the nature of sin. Yes, none but God can form such a judgment, *Who art thou that judgeth another?* Rom. xiv. 4. Such a judgment depends on so many difficult combinations, that none but an infinite intelligence is capable of making it with exactness.

In order to judge properly of a crime, and a criminal, we must examine the power of the temptations, to which he was exposed, the opportunities given him to avoid it, the force of his natural constitution, the motives that animated him, the resistance he made, the virtues he practised, the talents God gave him, the education he had, what knowledge he had acquired, what conflicts he endured, what remorse he has felt. An exact comparison ought to be made of his sins with his virtues, in order to determine whether sin prevails over virtue, or whether virtue prevails over sin, and on this confronting of evidence a proper idea of the sinner in question must be formed. It must be examined whether he were seduced by ignorance, or whether he were allured by example, or whether he yielded through weakness, whether dissipation or obstinacy, malice, or contempt of God and his law confirmed him in sin. On the examination of all these articles depends the truth of the judgment, which we form of a fellow creature. There needs nothing but one circumstance, nothing but one degree of more or less in a moral action to change the nature of it, to render it pardonable or irremissible, deserving compassion or horror. Now who is he, who is the man, that is equal to this combination? Accordingly, nothing more directly violates the laws of benevolence and justice, than some decisive opinions, which we think proper to give on the characters of our neighbours. It is indeed the office of judges to punish such crimes as disturb the peace of society; and each individual may say to his brethren, this is the path of virtue, that is

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the road of vice. We have authority indeed to inform them, that *the unrighteous*, that is, *adulterers, idolators, and fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Indeed we ought to apprize them of danger, and to make them tremble at the sight of the bottomless pit, toward which they are advancing a great pace: but to make such a combination as we have described, and to pronounce such and such people reprobates is rashness, it is to assume all the authority of the sovereign judge.

There is in the opinion of the pharisee a selfish *pride*. What is it then that makes this woman deserve his indignation? At what tribunal will she be found more odious than other sinners who insolently lift their heads both in the world and the church? It is at the tribunal of pride. Thou superb pharisee! Open thine eyes, see, look, examine, there is within the walls, where thy feast is prepared, there is even at thy table a much greater sinner than this woman, and that sinner is thyself! The sin, of which thou art guilty, and which is more abominable than unchastity, more abominable than adultery, more abominable than prostitution itself, is pride, and above all, pharisaical pride. The sin of pride is always hateful in the eyes of God, whether it be pride of honour, pride of fortune, or pride of power: but pride, arising from an opinion of our own righteousness is a direct crime against the divine majesty. On what principles, good God! is such a pride founded! What insolence has he, who is animated with it when he presents himself before God? He appears without fear and dread before that terrible throne, in the presence of which seraphims cover their faces, and the heavens themselves are unclean. He ventures to say to himself, I have done all my duty. I have had as much respect for God Almighty as he deserves. I have had as much zeal and ardour in prayer as the exercise requires. I have so restrained my tongue as to have no word, so directed my mind as to have no thought, so kept my heart as to have no criminal emotion to reproach myself with; or if I have had at any time any frailty, I have so fully made amends for it by my virtue, that I have sufficiently satisfied all the just demands of God. I ask no favour, I want nothing but justice. Let the judge of the world call me before him. Let devouring fire, and eternal flames glitter in my presence. Let the tribunal of retribution be prepared before me. My arm shall save me, and a recollection of my own righteousness shall support me in beholding all these objects. You sufficiently perceive, my brethren, what makes this disposition so hateful, and we need not enlarge on the subject. Humility is the supplement of the virtues of the greatest saints. What application soever we have made to our duty, we have always fallen short of our obligations. We owe so much homage to God as to acknowledge, that we cannot stand before him, unless we be objects of his mercy; and a crime humbly acknowledged is more tolerable in his eyes, than a virtue set forth with pride and parade.

What above all poisons the judgment of the pharisee is that spirit of *cruelty*, which we have observed. He was content, though all the tears of true repentance shed by this woman were shed in vain, and wished when the woman had recourse to mercy, that God

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would have assumed in that very instant a shocking character, that is, that he would have *despised the sacrifice of a broken and contrite heart*, Psalm li. 17. It is delightful, my brethren, to combat such a fatal pretence. There is a high satisfaction in filling one's mind with just and elevated ideas of divine mercy. All we say against the barbarity of the pharisee will serve to strengthen our faith, when Satan endeavours to drive us to despair, as he endeavoured once to destroy us by security, when he magnifies the sins we have committed, as he diminished them, when he tempted us to commit them.

The mercy of God is not an abstract attribute, discovered with great difficulty through shades and darkness by our weak reason: but it is an attribute issuing from that among his other perfections, of which he hath given the most clear and sensible proofs, I mean his goodness. All things preach to us, that God is good. There is no star in the firmament, no wave of the ocean, no production of the earth, no plant in our gardens, no period in our duration, no gifts of his favour, I had almost said no strokes of his anger which do not contribute to prove this proposition, God is good.

An idea of the mercy of God is not particular to some places, to any age, nation, religion, or sect. Although the empire of truth doth not depend on the number of those that submit to it, there is always some ground to suspect we are deceived, when we are singular in our opinions, and the whole world contradict us: but here the sentiments of all mankind to a certain point agree with ours. All have acknowledged themselves guilty, and all have professed to worship a merciful God. Though mankind have entertained different sentiments on the nature of true repentance, yet all have acknowledged the prerogatives of it.

The idea of the mercy of God, is not founded merely on human speculations, subject to error: but it *is founded on clear revelation*; and revelation preaches this mercy far more emphatically than reason. These decisions are not expressed in a vague and obscure manner, so as to leave room for doubt and uncertainty, but they are clear, intelligible, and reiterated.

The decisions of revelation concerning the mercy of God do not leave us to consider it as a doctrine incongruous with the whole of religion, or connected with any particular doctrine taught as a part of it: but they *establish it as a capital doctrine*, and on which the whole system of religion turns. What is our religion? It is a dispensation of mercy. It is a supplement to human frailty. It is a refuge for penitent sinners from the pursuits of divine justice. It is a covenant, in which we engage to give ourselves wholly up to the laws of God, and God condescends to accept our imperfect services, and to pardon our sins, how enormous soever they have been, on our genuine repentance. *The promises of mercy* made to us in religion are not restrained to sinners of a particular order, nor to sins of a particular kind: but they *regard all sinners and all sins* of every possible kind. There is no crime so odious, no circumstance so aggravating, no life so obstinately spent in sin, as not to be pitiable and pardonable, when the sinner affectionately and sincerely returns

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to God. If perseverance in evil, if the sin against the Holy Ghost exclude people from mercy, it is because they render repentance impracticable, not because they render it effectual.

The doctrine of divine mercy is not founded on promises to be accomplished at some remote and distant period; but *experience hath justified* these promises. Witness the people of Israel, witness Moses, David, Ahab, Hezekiah, witness Manasseh, Nineveh, Nebuchadnezzar. What hath not repentance done? By repentance the people of Israel suspended the judgments of God, when they were ready to fall on them and crush them. By repentance Moses *stood in the breach, and turned away the wrath of God.* By repentance David recovered *the joy of his salvation*, after he had committed the crimes of murder and adultery. By repentance even Ahab obtained a reprieve. By repentance Hezekiah enlarged the term of his life *fifteen years.* By repentance Manasseh saved himself and his people By repentance Nineveh obtained a revocation of the decree that a prophet had denounced against it. By repentance Nebuchadnezzar recovered his *understanding*, and his *excellent majesty*. It would be easy to enlarge this list. So many reflections, so many arguments against the cruel pretence of the pharisee.

III. You have seen in our first part the repentance of the immodest woman. In the second you have seen the judgment of the pharisee. Now it remains to consider *the judgment of Jesus Christ* concerning them both. "There was a certain creditor, which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty, and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little." This is our third part.

These words have occasioned a famous question. It hath been asked whether the pardon granted by Jesus Christ to this woman were an effect of her love to Jesus Christ: or whether her love to Jesus Christ were an effect of the pardon she had received from him. The expressions, and the emblems made use of in the text, seem to countenance both these opinions.

The parable proposed by our Saviour favours the latter opinion, that is, that the woman's love to Jesus Christ was an effect of the pardon she had received. A certain creditor had two debtors, when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave the one five hundred pence, and the other fifty. Which of them will love him most? The answer is, He, I suppose, to whom he forgave most. Who doth not see, that the love of this debtor is an effect of the

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acquittance from the debt? And as this acquittance here represents the pardon of sin, who doth not see that the love of this woman, and of all others in her condition, is here stated as the effect of this pardon? But the application which Jesus Christ makes of this parable, seems to favour the opposite opinion, that is, that the love here spoken of was the cause and not the effect of pardon. Seest thou this woman? Said Jesus Christ to Simon, I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. Mine head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much. Doth it not seem, that the application of this parable proposes the pardon of the sins of this penitent, as being both the cause and the effect of her love.

This question certainly deserves illucidation, because it regards words proceeding from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, and on that account worthy of being studied with the utmost care: but is the question as important as some have pretended? You may find some interpreters ready to excommunicate one another on account of this question, and to accuse their antagonists of subverting all their foundations of true religion. There have been times (and may such times never return) I say, there were times, in which people thought they distinguished their zeal by taking as much pains to envenom controversies, as they ought to have taken to conciliate them; and when they thought to serve true religion by aggravating the errors of opposite religions. On these principles, such as took the words of the text in the first sense taxed the other side with subverting the whole doctrine of free justification; for, said they, if the pardon here granted to the sinner, be an effect of her love to Jesus Christ, what become of all the passages of scripture, which say, that grace, and grace alone obtains the remission of sin? They of the opposite sentiment accused the others with subverting all the grounds of morality; for, said they, if this woman's love to Jesus Christ be only an effect of pardon, it clearly follows, that she had been pardoned before she exercised love: But if this be the case, what become of all the passages of the gospel which make loving God a part of the essence of that faith without which there is no forgiveness? Do you not see, my brethren, in this way of disputing, that unhappy spirit of party, which defends the truth with the arms of falsehood; the spirit that hath caused so many ravages in the church, and which is one of the strongest objections, that the enemy of mankind can oppose against a reunion of religious sentiments, so much desired by all good men? What then, may it not be affirmed in a very sound sense, that we love God before we obtain the pardon of our sins? Have we not declaimed against the doctrine of such divines as have advanced that attrition alone, that is to say, a fear of hell without any degree of love to God was sufficient to open the gates of heaven to a penitent? Recourse to the Saviour of the world, such a recourse as makes the essence of faith, ought it to

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have no other motive than that of desiring to enjoy the benefits of his sacrifice? Should it not be animated with love to his perfections? But on the other hand, may it not also be said, in a sense most pure, and most evangelically accurate, that true love to God is an effect of the pardon we obtain of him? This love is never more ardent, than when it is kindled at the flame of that, which is testified in our absolution. Is our zeal for the service of God ever more fervent than when it is produced by a felt reconciliation to him? Are the praises we sing to his glory ever more pure, than when they rise out of such motives as animate glorified saints, when we can say with them, *unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, be glory and dominion?* Rev. i. 5. Do different views of this text deserve so much wormwood and gall?

But what is the opinion of the Saviour of the world, and what would he answer to the question proposed? Was the pardon granted to the sinner the cause of her love, or the effect of it? Which of the two ideas ought to prevail in our minds, that in the parable, or that in the application of it? The opinion most generally received in our churches is that the love of this woman ought to be considered as the effect of her pardon, and this appears to us the most likely, and supported by the best evidence: for the reason, on which this opinion is grounded, seems to us unanswerable. There is neither a critical remark, nor a change of virtue, that can elude the force and evidence of it: *a creditor had two debtors, he forgave the one five hundred pence, and the other fifty, the first will love him most.* Undoubtedly this love is the effect, and not the cause of the acquittance of the debt. On the contrary, the reason on which the second opinion is founded may be easily answered. It is grounded on this expression, *Her sins are forgiven, for she loved much.* The original reading is capable of another sense. Instead of translating *for she loved much*, the words may be rendered without any violence to the Greek text, *her sins are forgiven, and because of that* or *on account of that she loved much.* There are many examples of the original term being taken in this sense. We omit quotations and proofs only to avoid prolixity.

We must then suppose, that the tears now shed by this woman were not the first, which she had shed at the remembrance of her sins. She had already performed several penitential exercises under a sense of forgiveness, and the repetition of these exercises proceeded both from a sense of gratitude for the sentence pronounced in her favour, and from a desire of receiving a ratification of it. On this account we have not assigned the fear of punishment as a cause of the grief of this penitent, as we ought to have done had we supposed that she had not already obtained forgiveness. Our supposition supported by our comment on the words of the text in my opinion, throw great light on the whole passage. The pharisee is offended because Jesus Christ suffered a woman of bad character to give him so many tokens of her esteem. Jesus Christ makes at the same time an apology both for himself and for the penitent. He tells the pharisee, that the great esteem of this woman proceeds from a sense of the great favours, which she had received from him: that the

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pharisee thought he had given sufficient proof of his regard for Jesus Christ by receiving him into his house, without any extraordinary demonstrations of zeal, without giving him *water to wash his feet, oil to anoint his head*, or *a kiss* in token of friendship; and that what prevented him from giving greater marks of esteem was his considering himself in the condition of the first debtor, of whom only a little gratitude was required, because he had been released from an obligation to pay only a small and inconsiderable sum: but that this woman considered herself in the condition of the other debtor, who had been forgiven *five hundred pence;* and that therefore she thought herself obliged to give her creditor the highest marks of esteem. "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many are forgiven." *On this account she hath loved much*, and hath given me all these proofs of affection, which are far superior to those, which I have received at your table, *for he, to whom little is forgiven, loveth little.*

At length, Jesus Christ turns himself towards the penitent, and, affected at her weeping afresh, repeats his assurances of forgiveness, and appeases that sorrow, which the remembrance of her crimes excited in her heart, though she no longer dreaded punishment. *Go* saith he, *thy sins are forgiven—Go in peace.*

Ye rigid casuists, who render the path of life strait and difficult; ye, whose terrifying maxims are planted like briars and thorns in the roads to paradise; ye messengers of terror and vengeance, like the dreadful angels who with flaming swords kept guilty man from attempting to return to the garden of Eden; ye who denounce only hell and damnation; come hither and receive instruction. Come and learn how to preach, and how to write, and how to speak in your pulpits to your auditors, and how to comfort on a dying bed, a man, whose soul hovers on his lips, and is just departing. See the Saviour of the world; behold with what ease and indulgence he receives this penitent. Scarcely had she begun to weep, scarcely had she touched the feet of Jesus Christ with a little ointment but he crowned her repentance, became her apologist, pardoned during one moment of repentance the excesses of a whole life, and condescended to acknowledge for a member of *a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, this woman, and what kind of a woman? A woman guilty perhaps of prostitution, perhaps of adultery, certainly of impurity and fornication. After this, do you violently declaim against conversion, under pretence that it is not effected precisely at such time as you think fit to appoint? Do you yet refuse to publish pardon and forgiveness to that sinner, who indeed hath spent his whole life in sin, but who a few moments before he expires puts on all the appearance of true repentance, covers himself with sorrow and dissolves himself in tears, like the penitent in the text, and assures you that he embraces with the utmost fervor the feet of the Redeemer of mankind?

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Do I deceive myself, my brethren? I think I see the audience quicken their attention. This last reflection seems to suit the taste of most of my hearers. I think, I perceive, some reaching the right hand of fellowship to me, and congratulating me for publickly abjuring this day a gloomy and melancholy morality, more likely to drive sinners to despair than to reclaim them.

How, my brethren, have we preached to you so many years, and you after all so little acquainted with us as to imagine that we have proposed this reflection with any other design than that of shewing you the folly of it? Or rather are you so little acquainted with your religion, with the spirit of the gospel in general, and with that of my text in particular, as to derive consequences diametrically opposite to the design of inspired writers? And where, pray, are these barbarous men? Where are these messengers of vengeance and terrors? Where are the casuists, whose maxims render the road to eternal life inaccessible? Who are the men, who thus excite your anger and indignation? What! Is it the man, who hath spent fifty or sixty years in examining the human heart; the man who assures you that, after a thousand diligent and accurate investigations, he finds impenetrable depths of deception in the heart; the man, who from the difficulty of his own examinations derives arguments to engage you not to be satisfied with a superficial knowledge of your conscience, but to carry the light of the gospel into the darkest recesses of your heart; the man, who advises you over and over again that if you content yourselves with a slight knowledge of yourselves, you must be subject to ten thousand illusions, that you will take the semblance of repentance for repentance itself, that you will think yourselves *rich and increased with goods*, while you are *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*, Rev. iii. 17. Is this the rigid casuist, who offends and irritates you?

Perhaps it is the man, who tells you that, in order to assure yourselves that you are in a state of grace, you must love God with an esteem of preference, which will engage you to obey him before all his creatures; the man, who, judging by innumerable evidences that you prefer *serving the creature more than the Creator*, Rom. i. 25. concludes from this sad phenomenon that you have reason to tremble: The man, who advises you to spend at least one week in recollection and retirement before you partake of the Lord's supper: the man, who would have you purify your hands from the blood of your brethren, and your heart burning with hatred and vengeance, and on that account placed in a catalogue of *murderers'* hearts, according to the spirit of the gospel: the man, who forbids you to come to the Lord's supper while your wicked courses are only suspended instead of being reformed, and while your cruel exactions are only delayed instead of being entirely left off? Perhaps this is the man! Is this the rigid casuist, who offends and irritates you?

Or, probably, it is the man who hath attended you three, four, or half a dozen times in fits of sickness, who then saw you covered with tears, every time acknowledging your sins, and always calling heaven and earth to witness your sincere intention to reform, and to change your conduct, but who hath always seen you immediately

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on your recovery return to your former course of life, as if you had never shed a tear, never put up a prayer, never made a resolution, never appealed to heaven to attest your sincerity: the man, who concludes from such sad events as these that the resolutions of sick and dying people ought always to be considered as extremely suspicious; the man, who tells you that during all his long and constant attendance on the sick he hath seldom seen one converted on a sick bed (for our parts, my brethren we are mournful guarantees of this awful fact) the man alarmed at these frightful examples, and slow to publish the grace of God to dying people of a certain class; I say, probably, this is the man, who offends you! Is not this the cruel casuist, who provokes you?

What! Is it the man, who sees the sentence of death written in your face, and your house of clay just going to sink, to whom you appear more like a skeleton than a living body, and who fears every morning lest some messenger should inform him that you was found dead in your bed, who fears all this from your own complaints, what am I saying? from your own complexion, from the alarms of your friends, and from the terrors of your own family; the man who is shocked to see that all this makes no impression upon you, but that you live a life of dissipation and security, which would be unpardonable in a man, whose firm health might seem to promise him a long life; the man who cries to you, *awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light*, Eph. i. 11. improve the remainder of life, the breath which, though it leaves thee to totter, prevents thy falling down dead. Is this the man, the rigid casuist who offends and irritates you? Such maxims, such discourses, such books, such sermons, are they the systems of morality, which confound you, and drive you to despair?

After all, where are the sinners, whom these casuists have driven to despair? Where are those tormented and distracted consciences? For my part, I see nothing, turn my eyes which way I will, but a deep sleep. I see nothing but security, lethargy, insensibility. How is it possible that the history of our text, that the language of Jesus Christ, *Woman, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace*, that the voice of eternal truth should incline you to raise objections full of error and illusion? Is there no difference between your case and that of this penitent woman, none between Jesus Christ and your casuists? Is there any thing in which they agree? The casuist conversing with this penitent was a prophet, a prophet! he was a God, who *searched the reins and the hearts*, who saw the bottom of her soul, and who penetrated through all the vails, with which a frail human heart is covered, and beheld the truth of her conversion and the genuineness of her grief: but you, my brethren, you have no such casuists, and we can judge only by external performances, which ascertain your state only on condition that they proceed from your heart. Our penitent lay prostrate at the feet of the Lord of religion, who could save her if he pleased, by extraordinary means, and who could deliver her from death and hell by a singular effort of power not to be repeated: but your casuists are servants, who act by commission, under express directions and orders, and who have no right

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to announce peace till you answer the description given in the royal instrument. Such ministers, whatever assurances of grace and pardon they affect to give, ought never to calm your consciences till you have exactly conformed to the orders of their and your sovereign master. Our penitent came to ask pardon in a free and voluntary manner, while she was in perfect health, all her actions were unconstrained and spontaneous: but you wait till death hales you to the tribunal of God, you loiter till the fear of eternal flames fright you away from such pleasures as you continue to love, and to which you would most likely return again, did not God spare you the shame by not giving you an opportunity. The penitent in our text did all she could in her circumstances to express the truth of her repentance, there was no sacrifice so dear that she did not offer, no victim so valuable that she did not stab, if I may use such an expression, with the knife of repentance, no passion so inveterate that she did not eradicate, no marks of love for her Saviour so tender that she did not with all liberality express. Behold her eyes flowing with tears over the feet of Jesus Christ, behold her hair dishevelled, her perfumes poured out, behold all the characters of sincerity, which we have observed in our first part. Is there any one mark of a true conversion, which she does not bear? But you, how many artifices have you? How many actions of your lives, which we must not be allowed to state to you in the true point of light? How many tempers in your hearts, which must not yet be touched? Here, it is an enemy, the bare sound of whose name would increase your fever, and hasten your death. There it is an iniquitous acquisition, which you reserve for your son to enable him to take your name with greater honour, and to support with more dignity that vain parade, or rather that dust and smoke in which you have all your life involved yourself. Our penitent never deceived Jesus Christ: but you have deceived your friend a thousand and a thousand times. Our penitent wept over the odious parts of her life, and, far from being too proud to confess her sins, gloried in her confession while she blushed for her crimes; but your eyes, on the contrary, your eyes are yet dry, and it is Jesus Christ, who is yet weeping at your feet, it is he, who is shedding tears over you, as formerly over Jerusalem, it is he who is saying, O that *thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!* Luke xix. 42. Psal. lxxxi. 13. It is not then to you, but it is to your kind of repentance that sentences of absolution ought to be refused. The repentance of the unchaste woman was exactly conformable to the covenant of grace, to the genius of the gospel, and to the end of the mission of Jesus Christ. Hence from the mouth of the Saviour of the world proceeded, in spite of her former libertinism, in spite of the cruel censure of the pharisee, and in spite of the murmuring of the guests, these comfortable words, *Woman, thy sins are forgiven thee. Woman, thy faith hath saved thee. Go,* depart *in peace.*

Here, my brethren, the evangelist finishes the history of the penitent woman; and here we will finish this discourse. There is, however, one circumstance, which St. Luke hath omitted, and

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which, if I may venture to say so, I wish he had recorded in the most severe and circumstantial manner. What were the future sentiments of this woman after the courageous steps she had taken at her setting out? What emotions did absolution produce in her soul? What effects in her conscience did this language of the Saviour of the world cause, *Woman, thy sins are forgiven—thy faith hath saved thee—go in peace!* But there is nothing in this silence that ought to surprize us. Her joy was not a circumstance that came under the notice of the historian. In the heart of this frail woman converted and reconciled to God lay this mystery concealed. There was that *peace of God which passeth all understanding*, that *joy unspeakable and full of glory*, that *white stone, and that new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.* May you receive it, my brethren, that you may know it! May the grief of a lively and bitter repentance wound your hearts, that mercy may heal and comfort them, and fill them with pleasure and joy! God grant us this grace! To him be honour and glory forever. Amen.

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REPORT

OF

MINISTERIAL LABOURS

OF WILLIAM COLLIER.

Respected Brethren and Friends,

THE season of the year at which this Society celebrates its Anniversary, is calculated to impress our minds with a sense of the frailty of life and of our accountability at the judgment seat of JESUS CHRIST, when our existence will no longer be marked by the commencement or close of years. Since our last meeting an important portion of that precious time allotted to us on earth has passed away—it is gone forever! And how little the knowledge of Redemption which we have acquired? And how little, comparatively, have we done to promote that knowledge among our fellow creatures, the year past? But, although we have much to confess and lament on our part, we have much more to be grateful for on the part of our kind preserver and gracious Benefactor. We are mortal! All flesh is as grass. God is eternal. The word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

It is for the promotion, especially among the poor and wretched, of such a gospel as this; a gospel which involves our personal, domestic and civil interests, in their highest possible consideration, that we are convened in this place on this occasion. The report of my labours communicated to the Society at their adjourned meeting on the 12th of February, 1822, was, with the approbation of the directors, published in the Christian Watchman, on the 4th and 11th days of last May. Several ministering brethren, and others, have spoken to me of that publication in terms calculated to encourage labours of this kind, as being, especially, useful among the poor and ignorant inhabitants of such a city as this. Early in the spring of last year the Rev. AMOS BINGHAM engaged in ministerial labours under the patronage of the Boston Society for Missionary purposes; and it was their wish that we should be united in our services as much as circumstances in Divine providence would permit. Accordingly on the 15th day of March, I commenced my labours in connexion with that faithful and industrious minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our attention was directed particularly to the west part of the city. There we became acquainted with a Mr. ———, with whom we deposited a considerable num-

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ber of religious tracts, suitable to the state of society there, to be loaned, re-loaned, and circulated from house to house, till they should have been read by every family in that neighbourhood.—These little missionaries travel and preach where we cannot go; and, although in some instances they may have been abused, we have reason to believe, that, on the whole, they have done much good. When we have subsequently and unexpectedly called at some of the houses where they have been left, we have found them reading tracts previously obtained through our agency.

On and about the 9th day of April, Mr. Bingham and myself spent some time in visiting the people on the wharves the east side of Ann-street, towards the north part of the city. We found many poor and needy individuals and families in that direction; conversed and prayed with some—reproved and admonished others. Some readily received and apparently enjoyed our conversation and prayers during these visits. There are many poor people in that part of the city who need counsel, instruction and help.

My services were continued at the Mission-house until the commencement of the fall vacation at the Theological Seminary, at Andover; when I was relieved from that service by the students from that Institution; and Mr. Bingham and others. Mr. GAMBLE now supplies the morning congregation in that place regularly, which is increasing in numbers, attended with other indications of its stability and success.

On the 23d of April I visited Samuel Green, alias Mudge, in jail, under sentence of death. He appeared to be unusually hardened in sin. I asked him what were his views and feelings respecting his state after death, which would probably take place very soon by an ignominous execution? He replied with much apparent indifference, the amount of which was that he had not much to hope for, or much to fear. I told him that it was a great thing to be in eternity!—and that he would soon be dead!—and that he who believed in Jesus Christ, though he were dead yet shall he live—and whosoever liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die, and put the question to him, "Believest thou this?" He appeared to be struck with the words, and asked where they could be found; I told him in the eleventh chapter of John. He immediately went, dragging his massy chains across the room; took his Bible, found the place, turned down the leaf, and said he would look at it. I exhorted him to repent of his sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

On the 9th day of July a house was hired on a lease for one year, at a rent of two hundred and fifty dollars, with a view to change the use of the property and character of its occupants, situated at the corner of Southark and Gardner streets, and which for years had been one of the worst houses in the place, if not in the world. Our brother ROBERT WILSON is the lessee. The dance hall was immediataly partitioned off, and a part of it used as a religious Reading Room.

This is one of the most interesting and important establishments of the kind in the world. It seems to me that nothing could be better adapted to the suppression of vice and iniquity, which stalk

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through the streets with brazen front at noonday, than the judicious management and diligent use of this property. It comes directly to the point. And if rightly and perseveringly improved, must in the nature of things have a favourable effect upon the miserable state of society in that part of the city.

The circumstances connected with our getting possession of this house were very remarkable.

After a Religious Reading Room had been the subject of conversation and prayer in the midst of a private circle of christian friends composed chiefly of our respected sisters in the truth, who belong to the Boston Female Society for Missionary purposes, it was mentioned by brother Bingham that there was a house at West Boston to be let, which would answer very well for such an establishment. Accordingly, on the 27th of June we went into that part of the city in search of suitable accommodations for such an Institution. We were told this house had just been let for a dance hall. In two minutes after, we met the owner and ascertained from him the fact that it was not actually engaged, but that he was then come up to close the conversation upon that subject with the applicant, who evidently would, and was at that moment waiting to obtain it, at almost any rent, for the purposes of a dance hall, and such scenes of iniquity as are usually connected with such places. We immediately interfered, and obtained the refusal of the house at a reduced rent. A subscription was drawn up and recommended by the Rev. Mr. Jenks, stating our object, and application was made to several gentlemen in the city, who highly approved our design, and promptly covered almost the whole of the rent, by donation, on condition there should be a loss as we expected there necessarily would be, in consequence of the degraded and miserable state of society with which it is surrounded — Facts have verified our apprehensions. When we came to make application for respectable tenants, the local situation of the house was an insurmountable objection on the part of those who wanted to hire it. Several gentlemen who were pleased with the house, and would have taken it at the full amount of rent, if it had been situated in a good neighbourhood, declined engaging it solely on that account; and one person who actually did agree to remove into it with his family, was prevented, and gave it up for the same reason. One important *fact* which ought to be known, is fully established by the efforts which have been unsuccessfully made to let this house, viz: The owners of houses in Southark-street and its immediate vicinity, where they bring enormous rents, must suffer in their property from the dreadful state of society there, unless they facilitate by the use of their interest, the practice of the most abominable iniquity and awful scenes of pollution and misery.— Christians, friends, and citizens of Boston! What shall we say to these things? What can we say to these things at the bar of the Judge of the universe, if we do not incessantly cry against the abominations of the land, and through fear, endeavour to save some, pulling them out of the fire. Soon after the house was secured and reading room opened, the Rev. John Gamble, a Presbyterian

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Minister from Ireland, arrived with his family at our city and removed into it, a part of which he still occupies. How remarkable, my brethren, are the providences of God in regard to this whole undertaking. No sooner had the house been obtained in answer to prayer, but the Lord places a Minister of the Gospel, through the influence of that property in the midst of a neighbourhood emphatically denominated the place where Satan's seat is. I have never suspected myself of enthusiasm on any subject, but I must acknowledge that I do not recollect when my mind has been so much affected, and feelings interested in any providential occurrence as the obtaining of this house, and the establishment there of a Religious Reading Room. I felt a travel of soul, a weight of care and responsibility that was unutterable! Yet I was supported in the hope and encouraged by the belief that God would in some way or other succeed our efforts to bring about a change in the use of that property, and cause his people to dwell there who would diffuse a beneficial influence around the place. And were it possible and proper for me to relate all the exercises of my mind, and describe all the circumstances attending the occupancy of this property, I am persuaded you would say the finger of God has pointed out to us the use of this house; the hand of God hath secured it to us; and the arm of the Lord will yet be seen and powerfully felt in the beneficial results of these labours.

But the most important question yet remains to be discussed, viz: What has been, and what is likely to be the moral influence of these proceedings upon the people in that vicinity? I answer precisely the same as might be expected upon any people sunk in ignorance, vice and misery. The same measures are to be used with this part of society here, as ought to be used for the instruction and conversion of the heathen in Asia or Africa. And the same results are to be looked for. The only important difference between the heathen *here* and the heathen *there* is, that greater will be the condemnation of *these* than of *those*; if these reject the gospel and die in a state of impenitence and unbelief; and greater is the responsibility of christians on the part of unbelievers *here*, than it can be on account of the heathen in foreign countries. We must not only pray for a revival of religion in the conversion of sinners, but we must *do* something towards the work before we can expect the Lord will hear our prayers and bless the labour of our hands.—It is not merely in proportion to the frequency or fervency of our prayers, but in proportion to our works combined with our prayers, and a humble dependence on the grace of God to succeed the labour of our hands, that he makes us really, if not apparently successful in building up his cause and promoting the gospel of his Grace in the world. These principles have been illustrated in the Reading Room at West Boston, so far as we have practised upon them. Go among the people there and you will find enough to *do*, and see enough to satisfy you that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

A few extracts from my Journal will confirm the correctness and show the importance of these remarks.

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On the 21st March Mr. Bingham and myself laboured in the A. M. among the people at West Boston, conversed with a Mr. ——, who told us he had kept one of those houses for twenty years, but that he was sick of it and agoing to leave that course of life. Mr. B. exhorted him to prepare to meet his God. The old man appeared hardened in sin; yet uneasy and dissatisfied with his manner of life. We gave him a Christian Almanack, which was well received, and our reproofs and exhortations treated even by *such* a man with attention and respect.

March 26. Found much satisfaction in collecting the people together in the stores at West Boston, and reading tracts and short sermons to them.

April 2. Mr. B. and myself spent some time in conversation at Mrs. ——, who is, with her husband, a professor of religion.—Met Mr. —— there who owns a large property in that neighbourhood. He conversed freely and friendly with us and promised us every facility in his power to further the objects of our labour. Prayed during the interview.

April 6. An interesting day in our labours at the west part of the city.

16. Had much interesting conversation with Mr. ——, who said he was a mason by trade. He declined having prayers in his house, on account of the place being unsuitable for such an exercise. At the same time he observed that he approved highly of the preaching of the gospel, in the Mission house, and was willing to subscribe three or four dollars for the support of the minister. I asked him if he expected to pay his ministerial subscription by the fruits of an house unsuitable for prayer; and reasoned with him upon the absurdity and wickedness of his conduct. He evidently felt remorse of conscience. I endeavoured to show him the inconsistency of his principles and character; that sin involved its votaries in a thousand difficulties, and that my advice to him was, he had better extricate himself from his present situation as soon as possible. He said it was wrong, but there always had been and always would be such houses kept. I replied, that if it were wrong, let who would keep them, I hoped that he and I should keep clear of them.

He said you are right gentlemen. I will leave this place. I believe the resolution was formed under the influence of that conversation and soon carried into effect.

July 22. Attended at the Reading Room. Ten or twelve persons present at different times during the exercises there. Read with some apparent good effect, a part of the 6th and 7th Chapters of the Book of Proverbs, also a passage in the iii. of Titus; made some remarks upon the description the apostle there gives of our state as sinners—*foolish*—disobedient—*deceived*, &c.—as applicable to the state of society there, particularly so—and then directed their attention to the love and kindness of God our Saviour in the gospel of his mercy and grace, with some apparent good effect.

July 24. Found one young woman waiting at the door of the

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Reading Room, as I went to open it, this morning. She discovered an anxious state of mind. The place has been well attended today with inquirers. if not after the way of life and salvation, at least, how they may escape the state of sin and misery in which they are there involved.

27. Attended daily the Reading Room through the week. Had much interesting conversation with the poor and wretched who came frequently into the place.

Aug. 5. Eight persons attended for an hour or more to the reading of the scriptures and other religious exercises. The state of society here is most awful. Robbery and fighting among men and women are very common, both day and night. There is certainly a great door opened here for usefulness, and it might be an effectual one, if the people of God would step in and improve it.

23. Two young men were induced by conversation in the Reading Room to leave that neighbourhood, and I hope from the apparent effect it had upon their minds will leave that kind of society forever.—One week seven were induced to take a similar course: And many individuals from time to time have been persuaded away in a manner calculated to prevent their return, and to do them permanent good.

Sept. 5. This establishment has not been without opposition from its enemies. This evening a very serious disturbance occurred. Stones or hard substances were thrown, several times, with great violence against the house One of these was directed at the people in the Room through the window. The Rev. Mr. Gamble was sitting on the seat just by the place where the stone struck. It came with great force—broke three squares of glass; but as a kind providence directed, it struck the bar of the sash and fell to the ground. Had it gone one inch higher or lower it must have struck our Brother directly on the back of his head, and the consequences would have been very serious, and perhaps fatal to his life. What a remarkable preservation! An enemy was permitted to throw the stone, but he had no power to guide it. Unerring goodness preserved the life of our Brother.

On the 24th and 25th of Oct. the Reading Room exhibited a very pleasing and interesting scene. It was found that many persons in the neighbourhood were destitute of Bibles. A supply was procured; and the Rev. Messrs. Jenks, Rossiter, Bingham and myself, attended the distribution of them from that place.

The poor and needy were collected together, and during the two days, ninety-one Bibles and Testaments, a donation chiefly from the Massachusetts Bible Society, were given to the ignorant and wretched inhabitants of that vicinity. These pleasing services were attended with prayer, exhortation, and much appropriate advice and interesting conversation with the grateful recipients.

The Reading Room has, also, been a mean of facilitating the efforts which are making to improve the condition of the coloured people in the city. On the 8th of Nov. a society was formed, after sundry previous meetings, in the Reading Room, called the Wilberforce Society, the object of which is to encourage and as-

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sist the people of colour to learn trades; and to promote their improvement generally. The Cooper's business is already established with a view to that object, and several boys are learning to work at that employment. A primary school, supported at the publick expense is kept in the Reading Room by Miss Jeffries, a woman of colour belonging to Rev. Dr. BALDWIN's church, composed of children picked up in that neighbourhood, and drawn out of the most degraded and wretched situations. A Sabbath School for adults is also taught there. A Sabbath School for coloured people has likewise been taught at the north part of the city by our Brother EDWARD SMITH, under the patronage of this Society, a report of the state of which has been communicated by the Superintendant.* Many tender and affecting scenes have occurred during our labours among this portion of society:—Some times at the sight of the sick and miserable; some times at funerals; and at other times in witnessing the hardness and unfeeling hearts manifested in the abandoned lives of once apparently delicate and well bred females.

O! it is enough to affect the heart of a stone to witness the scenes of iniquity which are committed in our city. One case of an amiable youth, educated at a respectable Acadamy in Essex County in this state, was peculiarly affecting. During her lingering sickness she manifested the most distress of mind I ever witnessed, on account of her past conduct, and died overwhelmed with the most poignant *regret;* but of doubtful repentance.

I have attended most of the monthly prayer-meetings—continued my meeting at the Sail-loft, in the vicinity of Fort-Hill, on Lord's-day evenings—occasionally associated with the Rev. Mr. Jenks and others, in religious meetings, under the Bethel Flag—visited the Penitent Females' Refuge, and regularly performed my duties as

* Brother SMITH observes, in his communication to the Society, respecting the school in Robertson's Alley, "It is now almost twelve months since the voice of prayer has been heard in the School Room every Sabbath, and the children, with adults, have assembled for instruction. The largest number that we have had since our last report, at any one time, is thirty-five. The whole number that we have on our roll is sixty-one. From that number, one has died; a man about thirty years of age. He bore his last sickness with christian fortitude, and appeared to be perfectly resigned to the will of heaven. He, I believe, gave good evidence to all in the neighbourhood, that he died a Christian. Thus he has gone where he needs no more Sabbath School instructions. Since this school commenced, there has been a weekly school for the children supported by the town, and is under the direction of the School Committee. It is kept in the same room that we have for the Sabbath School. The Instructress is a professor of Religion, and closes her school with prayer. Our school has been visited by several gentlemen. Among the number, was Deacon MOSES GRANT, who appeared to take a great interest in the school. He made us a present, to purchase some tickets and small books for Rewards. Mr. HENRY J. OLIVER has taken a deep interest in the school, and has visited it more or less ever since we commenced. It is now under his direction for a few months, and I hope it may be more prosperous, that we may in future have something more pleasing to state to the Society.

"From your Humble Servant,

"EDWARD SMITH."

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Chaplain of the State Prison. The limits of this communication do not permit me to remark particularly upon these services. I would, however, observe that, there is evidently an increasing attention to the Gospel, among the Convicts in the State Prison. The Services in the Chapel are attended with interest. More than twenty of the Prisoners, by their diligence in business, redeeming time for that purpose, associate daily, for prayer and exhortation, in a room by themselves; and are desirous of distinguishing themselves by a conversation and a deportment becoming the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Before I close this already too protracted Report, it may not be improper for me to say a few things relative to the work which is before us, and the future operatioas of this Society.

First. The preaching of the Gospel is the great mean, according to the appointment of Heaven, by which sinners are reconciled unto God. We should prudently do every thing in our power to promote this work—and that whether in large or small assemblies.—It is an erroneous opinion that the gospel cannot be preached, except Meeting-houses first be built and great congregations established. Let us collect the people together in private or public houses, and gratefully improve such opportunities as Divine Providence may afford us, to shew unto few or many the path of life. To point them to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.

Second. In this work, so far as we, unitedly are concerned, special reference should be had to the condition of the poor, forlorn and outcast of society. Let no one object that this is a low and servile work. "It is a great thing," says an eminent Theologian, "to preach the Gospel any where," to any people. And in my opinion, the more ignorant, vicious and miserable the people, the more especially should our attention be directed to that people, and unremitted our exertions for their reformation. Never give up the case of a single individual as hopeless. The grasp of the Lion of the tribe of Judah can arrest the prey from the mighty, and the lawful captive shall be delivered. Let as then go to their houses, carrying the reproofs and instructions of the Scriptures to the haunts of vice and iniquity, and its consolations to the abodes of penitent wretchedness, from which poverty and shame prevent the miserable occupants from going to places where the Gospel is preached, and its Sacraments administered. Many of those poor forlorn creatures would often listen to your instructions, and their countenances brighten at the annunciation of pardon through the merits of a compassionate Redeemer, conferred upon the wicked and unrighteous, when they forsake their thoughts and ways, and return to the Lord for mercy and salvation.

Third. Constant exertions should be made to save the children from temptation, idleness, and iniquity. Evil communications corrupt, even, good manners. I have no doubt many a child has been lost upon the Hill through the criminal neglect of the people of God. And be assured many more will be lost there if we neglect our duty in this respect. I know of no objects of usefulness in which we can more successfully engage than to snatch these ten-

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der flowers from the devouring flames. O! my friends, do not leave these dear children for whom I now plead in their present situation—you can help them—you must help them. And could you see them I know you would help them. Come, go with us and visit them. Let us see that they go to schools, to Sabbath Schools, and to meeting—that they have places for service and to learn trades, &c. The best way to bestow your charity upon the poor is to give them useful employment. Teach them the value of time and property, and to live by the industry of their own hands.

Fourth. In addition to the meetings in the Reading Room, let it be daily occupied from the time the primary school is dismissed until 9 o'clock in the evening, as a place of religious instruction for adults. It is an advantageous post. It is now and might be rendered still more so, a terror and dread to the wicked. Many youth and citizens and sailors who pass by that way might be inclined to listen to the words of life and turn away from the paths of death. If it could be known that there was a religious meeting held in that Room every night in the week the effects would soon be visible upon the state of society in that part of the city.

Fifth. Exertions might be advantageously made by this Society, especially though the medium of the Reading Room, to accommodate seamen with suitable Boarding Houses, and induce them to save their wages, avoid bad company, form connexions and live respectably in the world. Some person should be employed to visit all the vessels in our harbour, and on every arrival be on board as soon as the custom-house officers are; converse with the Captain and Officers—get the confidence of the Sailors—see that such as would associate with respectable people had every facility afforded them to such an intercourse. In performing such services as those in which brother B. and myself have been unitedly engaged, and much of the service here narrated is to be considered in that point of view, in which he has often stood in the front of battle and fearlessly attacked the consciences and crimes of the wicked, and the services here recommended it is particularly desirable that they should be undertaken in union with other societies of a similar tendency, that the servants of the Lord might go out, at least, two by two. In such cases the prospects of success would be great.

Sixthly. Encourage by our individual influence correct Discipline in the Churches. This is a very important subject in relation to these labours.

If these things are duly attended to, it is not a vain confidence to expect that we shall meet some of the objects of our pity and subjects of our care in a state of future blessedness—prepared by our humble efforts being made efficient through the influences of the Holy Spirit to join the song of the redeemed in glory:—Unto him that hath loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood.

Brethren, time is short! The year on which we have just entered is short—life itself is too short to accomplish the work before us. Let every heart be warm, and every hand diligent. Amen.

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POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the foregoing communication was written the state of things at West-Boston is increasingly favourable. A large house situated on the corner of Southark and Garden streets, nearly opposite the Reading Room, has been totally changed as to the character of its occupants: and a School established in the front shop which used to be much resorted to for ardent spirit and loose company. The feelings of the publick are more alive, and the prayers and labours of the pious more abundant, in relation to the state of society on the "*Hill*" as it is sarcastically and vulgarly called, than at any former period since the attention and efforts of a portion of the community have been specially directed to that object.

I regret extremely that the Ministers of the Gospel of all denominations, and christians generally, do not take a different view of the evils here referred to, and their appropriate remedies, than what some of them have hitherto done. With a view to encourage the friends already engaged, and to interest others in the same good work, I would respectfully invite the attention of the publick to a few extracts from the life of the Rev. DR. SCOTT, in relation to his labours of a similar character.

Before I introduce these extracts, I take leave to make one remark, and from my connexion with the State Prison, as Chaplain of that Institution, and labour, among the poor and wretched since my residence in this city, I hope I shall not be thought intrusive when I apprise the reader that my judgment upon this subject is certainly entitled to some consideration. I do therefore say, in so many words, my opinion decidedly is, that the sink of iniquity at West Boston is the most prolific source of PAUPERISM and CRIME that can be found in the state of Massachusetts.

DR. SCOTT, speaking in relation to the Lock Hospital says:—

"On my return home from one of my irregular excursions, in September, 1785, I found a letter from the Secretary of the Lock Hospital, written in the name of several governors, saying, that it had been resolved to appoint a person to the office of morning preacher in the chapel, and visiting chaplain to the patients; that, from what they had heard concerning me, they were of opinion that I should be a very suitable person for the situation; and that it was their request that I would come to London, and give them the opportunity of hearing me. Nothing could be more contrary to my own views of what my peculiar talent, whatever it was, qualified me for, than this proposal—except as the poor patients were concerned. I therefore wrote a very plain answer, stating my views of the gospel, and my determination to speak my mind in the plainest language, wherever I might be called to preach; and my consciousness of being totally destitute of those attractions

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of manner and elocution, which such a situation demanded. My friends, who afterwards saw the letter, approved it much, except the last clause, in which I consented to come and preach, if the governors still desired it.—Accordingly I did go, and preached two sermons, in as plain and faithful a manner as I possibly could; without attempting any thing different from my homely style in other places. I really thought that this specimen would be sufficient; and I hoped good might be done to some individuals, by such addresses delivered in that place.

"In a few weeks the election took place: no other person was proposed; and I was appointed, with only three opposing voices. This was unexpected; and I saw more and more reason on every consideration and inquiry, to conclude that, if I acceded to this appointment, I should be plunged into difficulties and trials of a most dismaying nature. Yet I did not dare to give a direct refusal, without taking further advice on the subject. It might be an opening to more enlarged usefulness: and my own personal feelings must not be allowed much weight in such a case.

"I did not give my answer to the governors of the Lock till the last day, and almost the last hour, allowed me for deliberation.

"Whatever others judged, my own people, who were most attached to me, and most grieved to part with me, were convinced that I was called by providence to remove, and that I did my duty in complying with it. I am not, however, myself to this day satisfied on the subject.—When I consider what a situation I *inadvertently* rushed into, I fear I did not act properly, and I willingly accept all my unspeakable mortifications and vexations as a merciful correction of my conduct, which, though not, in one sense, inconsiderate, yet shewed strange inattention to the state of parties, and other circumstances at the Lock; which, had I duly adverted to them, would have made me think it madness to engage in such a service.

"I had indeed imagined that I should, without much difficulty, procure a lectureship on the Sunday afternoon or evening, and perhaps one on the week-day; and I stood ready for any kind or degree of labour to which I might be called. But, whilst almost all my brethren readily obtained such appointments, I could never, during the seventeen years of my residence in town, procure any lectureship, except that of St. Mildred's Bread Street, which, in a manner, came to me, because no other person thought it worth applying for.

"Almost my whole comfort, as a minister, arose from my labours in the hospital, which, with all the disgusting circumstances of the service, were far more pleasing and encouraging to me, than preaching in the chapel. I constantly attended twice in the week, each time preaching first in the women's wards, and then in the men's.—I took the plainest portions of scripture, and spoke in a strain of close address to the conscience, and altogether in a manner, which I could never equal in any other place; and so as always to fix the attention, and often greatly to affect the hearts, of my poor profligate auditors. I concluded each address with an appropriate prayer. I was restricted by no rules: indeed I could not have acted to my

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own satisfaction, had any been prescribed: but I did the very best that I could.

"I soon perceived the plan, and indeed the institution itself, to be utterly incomplete, as far as the female patients were concerned.

"Amidst all my difficulties, therefore I formed the plan of an asylum.—It often appeared to me that it must be given up for want of money to defray the expenses. For a long time the only return I met with for my assiduity was censure, even from quarters from which I least expected it: but I trust several immortal souls have been, and will be saved by means of the institution. I cannot doubt that the very opposition at first made to it by some friends of the Magdalen, who afterwards favoured it, occasioned some important improvements in the management of that charity."

For several years he attended daily (without any remuneration,) to conduct family worship, and give religious instruction in the house; and he constantly had a servant in his family taken from the asylum. The reports, drawn up by him, detail many instances of those who were not only reclaimed and restored to society, but evidently converted to God by the means thus used; and who shewed this by a long course of consistent conduct,—terminating, in several cases, in a Christian and happy death.—An useful hint to more than one description of persons. It should be remembered that it comes from one, who had ample opportunity of knowing the truth of what he asserts.

"By no means let ——— come to London, if you can help it. I look upon the young women who come to London for places, (a few prudent and clever ones excepted,) just in the light I do upon the cattle that come to Smithfield market: they come to be a prey to the inhabitants. I wonder any of those who have not very prudent and friendly connexions escape prostitution. At every offence, girls are turned out of doors with a month's wages, often in the evening, and at an hour's warning. They have lodgings to seek: a set of wretches let lodgings, who make it their study to betray them into situations from which few escape. Often their clothes are stolen: if not, they are pawned for money to pay expenses and in a few weeks they are thus stripped of apparel and can go to no place at all. In short, dangers are innumerable, and the number that, without any such previous intention, are seduced and become prostitutes and perish without any regarding it, is incredible. It is shocking to me beyond expression: and I think I should leave London with pleasure, for this single circumstance, did not a sense of duty at present detain me: but perhaps that will not long be the case.—But all will be well, and will end well, for them that trust in and serve God.

"I can form no manner of conclusion whether this removal will be an advantage or disadvantage to my secular interest. However I have acted according to my judgment and conscience, and find no difficulty in leaving the event to him who says, *seek first the kingdom of God, &c.* The Sunday morning congregations are large, and many of them persons of rank and fortune, who yet approve of our unfashionable doctrines. I preach likewise every other Wednesday

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evening, and every Friday evening to considerable numbers, at stated times in the week I visit the patients, explain the scriptures and pray with them. They are in general of the most wretched and abandoned of the human species, many of them common prostitutes: yet remembering that Jesus himself disdained not to preach to such, and told the proud pharisees, that *the publicans and harlots entered into the kingdom of heaven before them*, I take pleasure in this work, and expect much good from it; and I find the poor wretches exceedingly attentive, and very much affected. Jesus Christ *is able to save to the uttermost all them that come to God by him; and him that cometh unto him, he will in no wise cast out.* Nothing is wanting but to convince them all of their need of such a Saviour.

"I am surrounded," he says, "daily with pretty much the same sort of company that my Master was, Luke xv 1. The Lord grant that I may behave among them in some good measure as he did, and speak to them with the same success! Most people here are very unbelieving about it, and think no good can be done: but I am enabled to expect great things from the power, mercy, and love of Christ. I would *believe*, and hope to *see the glory of God* in their conversion. Indeed I do see some good fruits; and though there are many disappointments, and I am often ready to be discouraged, yet upon the whole I think I may confidently say, good is done: and, if God help me to persevere, and neither faint in, nor grow weary of, nor act inconsistently with, my work and office, I trust I may expect a good harvest at last."

If the Directors will substitute the phrase "Penitent Female's Refuge" for "Lock Hospital" they will find many appropriate and useful remarks in the preceding extracts from Dr. Scott's journal of his labours at that institution. And the friends of missionary exertions in this city may, also, find much to support and encourage them in the work in which they are engaged; and to convince others that it is not a low and disreputable thing to do good to the wretched and miserable portion of any community. We would also, remind our brethren that Paul says, on one occasion, I magnify mine office—*not myself.* So ministers and Christians, while they glory to suffer reproach for the sake of Christ, should not be indifferent to the estimation in which their standing and labours are viewed by their brethren and the world, for the sake of their *office* and *profession.*

We value the good opinion of others, but when that desirable object comes in competition with duty to the young and rising generation and the immortal interests of dying sinners around us, no one can hesitate a moment, as to the sacrifice.—A well bred family are surrounded with opulence, literature, and every external accomplishment which could render them happy at home and respected abroad—the children are very numerous and beautiful; the joy and delight of their parents—the promise and hope of their country—they are remarkable for their amiableness, urbanity and even religious deportment. But a poisonous reptile makes his appearance in the house! What would be the sensations of the whole family at the sight of such a monster? Horror! horror! And yet the creature

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is suffered to live, and crawl from room to room about the house. He is even caressed and admired, especially by the children and younger members of the family. By and by his imperceptible, deadly bite is seen in the odious sickness and shocking deaths of several of the household. This creates no alarm! An awful delusion takes place and a great majority become fascinated with their own destruction. A few, however, see the danger, lament the crime and calamity, and endeavour to effect the destruction of the monster. But how shall it be done?—See that anxious father—that agonizing mother—that affectionate brother—that amiable sister covered with shame and astonishment at the disgrace and misery of their own relations. They cry aloud for help: Who will answer? Let the rulers of the people—the Ministers of religion—the pious of all denominations and every citizen of respectability promptly and effectively answer, there is no "*Hill!*"

These crimes and calamities exist to an alarming extent. And I hope that it will not be thought *indelicate*, if the *mother* in her overwhelming distress should cry even to her *bitten children* to flee from the face of so horrible a serpent! And unceasingly exhort and persuade them to repent, and apply by faith to the Balm of Gilead and the Physician there, whose precious blood cleanseth from all sin! This remedy has been proved and found efficacious in a number of cases, precisely of the character of those here referred to. Indeed, the charge of indelicacy rests upon those whose *indifference* can suffer such a state of things to exist among us, and not upon those whose anxious cares and persevering labours are directed to the removal of them. *The evil exists*—that it should be suffered by any civilized community, I acknowledge is *indelicate*—It is cruel!—It is horrible! Every feeling of humanity recoils at the sight! But so long as it does exist, and so long as compassion and benevolence can interest the feelings of the human heart, those who cannot bear the evil should at least be exonerated from reproach on account of their efforts to remove it. I hope therefore no civil magistrate, no minister of the Gospel, no professor of Religion, no citizen of respectability and influence will rest easy, so long as ONE SUCH HOUSE is suffered to remain in this city.

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4.

THY KINGDOM COME:

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED IN THE OLD SOUTH CHURCH, BOSTON,

BEFORE THE

FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY

OF

BOSTON AND THE VICINITY,

JANUARY 3, 1820.

BY SERENO EDWARDS DWIGHT,
Pastor of the Congregational Church, Park-Street, Boston.

BOSTON:
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1820.

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SERMON.

MATTHEW vi, 10.....*Thy Kingdom come!*

THE Prayer, of which this petition is a part, is the best Form of prayer, that was ever devised. It was made for the use of the Church at large, and is constantly offered by all denominations of christians. We may presume, therefore, that all unite in wishing, that this Petition may be granted.

The Kingdom here mentioned is not the Universal kingdom of Jehovah. That was fully come, long before this prayer was dictated. It is a kingdom which is to come *on Earth;* and when come is to resemble that which exists in Heaven. The prophet Daniel informs us what this kingdom is, and who is its King. "I saw in the night visions, and behold one like unto the SON OF MAN; and there was given him a Kingdom,—that all people, nations and languages should serve him." It is unlike earthly kingdoms. "My kingdom," said the Redeemer, "is not of this world." It is a Spiritual kingdom. "The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The seat of this kingdom then is this world; Christ is the King; the Gospel is the statute-book; renewed men are the subjects; and holiness is the character.

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To offer the petition, "Thy kingdom come,—on earth as in heaven," is therefore to pray that the spiritual dominion of Christ the Mediator over the minds of men may become universal; in other words, that all mankind may become christians.

This kingdom is not yet come. But a small portion of mankind even know the name of its King, or are acquainted with the establishment of his kingdom. Of this small portion, but few have hitherto become the subjects of the kingdom of righteousness; and a great change for the better must be wrought even in these few, before the will of God is done, and his name hallowed among them, as it is in heaven.

Much curiosity has existed in the church to know the *Time* when this kingdom will come; its *Extent;* and its *Duration.* On these topics, the limits of a single discourse will not allow me to expatiate. Yet a few remarks may not be unappropriate.

The Scriptures assure us that a Period is approaching, on the arrival of which this kingdom of righteousness will be fully established. They also justify us in inquiring, when it will arrive; by furnishing us various means of determining with greater or less probability the period of its arrival. They mention various events, which will occur before it arrives. One is, that the everlasting Gospel will be preached to all nations; and another, if the whole body of Protestant Commentators is not deceived, that the Romish Church will be utterly destroyed. They also specify the exact number of years, during which that Church is to usurp the dominion of Christ. I am not one of those who believe, on the one hand, that the scriptural prophecies on this subject are so clear and explicit, as to enable us, who live before their fulfil-

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ment to become prophets, and determine with exactness the period in which it is to take place. Nor am I one of those, on the other, who view, the disquisitions of wise and learned men on this subject as Theological Romances. In doing this, I should take the chair of decision, and pronounce myself more wise and learned than they. Without admitting or denying their conclusions, I have no doubt that what they have written has drawn the attention of the Church to the subject, and to their duty with regard to it; that it has animated their prayers and increased their efforts; and thus has proved an important means of bringing the event to pass. It may be safely said, however, that the most satisfactory interpretations of prophecy, as well as the events of providence, justify us in believing, that the coming of this kingdom is comparatively near at hand; and that the period when it shall be fully come is not far from the year 2000.

As to the *Extent* of this kingdom, I will only remark, that I have yet seen no reason to conclude, that the command of Christ, "Go and make a disciple of every creature," is not to be obeyed; or that the promise, "They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, Know the Lord, because all shall know me from the least of them even to the greatest;" or the equally comprehensive promise, "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;" is hyperbolical.

As to its *Duration* in this prosperous state, it is enough for our present purpose to remark, that it will exist for a very long period; that ultimately there will be a falling away; and that after this apostasy the Church will exist, though its numbers will be comparatively few, until the second coming of Christ.

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It may here be asked, Will then the kingdom of Christ come to an end?—This question may be thus answered. The universal kingdom of Jehovah is under *a government of mere Law.* In this world, which before the Fall of Man was under the same government, a new and distinct Dispensation is established: *a government of Grace.* It exists for a time, and for a special purpose: to recover a vast multitude of the inhabitants to the condition of loyal subjects. Over them, when recovered, the Messiah reigns on Earth as the representative of the Godhead. This, which may properly be called Christ's *Representative Kingdom,* will come to an end. At the Final Consummation, having accomplished the purpose for which it was established, he will deliver it up to God even the Father.* Then the government of Grace will terminate; every part of the Universe will as before, be under the government of Law; and God will be all in all.

Those who are thus restored are Christ's peculiar people; more nearly connected with him than any of the creatures of God. In whatever world they exist, He is their King, and they his subjects. In the riches of his grace he has chosen to translate them to heaven, to dwell with him where he is, that they may behold his glory. This kingdom, which may properly be called Christ's *Mediatorial Kingdom,* is an everlasting kingdom; this dominion shall never be destroyed.

With these preliminary remarks, suffer me to direct your attention to the following inquiries;

1. What Obstacles exist in the way of the coming of this kingdom;
2. By what Means it will come;
3. What has hitherto been done to bring it forward;

* 1 Cor. xv, 24.

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4. Can the necessary means be furnished;

5. Who are especially called upon to furnish them.

Our examination of each of these points must be brief.

1. What Obstacles must be removed, before the kingdom of Christ shall become universal.

This inquiry opens a gloomy and discouraging prospect. Yet it is not my intention to represent the number or the magnitude of these difficulties as any less than they really are.

Eighteen hundred years are gone since the coming of Christ; yet to three-fourths of the human race the Gospel has never been preached. A very small proportion of the remaining fourth have as yet heard it in its purity. His kingdom will not come, until the Gospel is preached in its purity to the whole human race.

The population of the Earth is in round numbers 800 millions. Of these, 200 millions are nominally Christians. Half of this number, or about 100 millions, are Catholics; 40 millions are of the Greek Church; and about 60 millions are Protestants. In Protestant countries not more than one fifth of the whole adult population; i. e. not more than 6 millions in 60; profess to be subjects of the kingdom of righteousness. Of those who make this profession, great multitudes do it little honour, and give no reason to believe that the King acknowledges them as his subjects. Christ's kingdom will not come until the vast multitude of nominal christians in Protestant countries have their names recorded among his loyal subjects.

The Protestant Church is rent into numberless sects, which contend about forms of government, modes of worship, qualifications for the ordinances, and modes of administering them. The Protestant

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world, having been the chief seat of free inquiry, has also been the chief seat of open heresy and avowed infidelity. This kingdom will not come, until, throughout the whole church, there is "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism;" nor until there is not an heretic nor an infidel on the globe.

The Greek Church, as yet, is chiefly without the Bible; and few of the 40 millions included in it could read it if they had it. This Church is sadly departed from the purity and spirituality of the worship of Christ. It must be enlightened and purified.

The Catholic Church, as Protestants generally believe, is destined to destruction. It is obvious that the excessive ignorance, bigotry and superstition of Catholic countries must be done away; their dreadful pollutions purified, and their whole system of penance, absolution, indulgences, and auricular confession destroyed; before this event can take place.

Ten millions of mankind are Jews, scattered over every country under heaven. All these must confess with the tongue and believe with the heart, that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah the Son of David.

About 90 millions are Mohammedans. Their religion is a compound of cruelty, pollution and falsehood. No Mohammedan nation ever yet renounced its faith; and our brethren now on their way to Jerusalem are the first missionaries ever stationed in a Mohammedan country.* Yet in this benighted region the standard of the Crescent must be furled, and the banner of the Cross must wave in its stead.

At least 500 millions of mankind, or five-eighths of the human race, are Heathens. They are chiefly

* The mission of Karass is within the limits of Russia.

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savages; and must be civilized. They are sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance and pollution; and must be elevated, purified, and enlightened. They worship demons; and must be brought to know and worship Jehovah.

All this mighty moral revolution must take place before the prayer in the Text is answered.

2. What Means are to be employed for this purpose.

That this kingdom will not come of itself; and that the age of miracles will not return; all will admit. Of course, Means must be employed to bring it forward. What these Means are, we may learn from Facts, and from the Scriptures.

Nations have heretofore been converted to Christianity. How was it done? In the first instance, Christ sent his Apostles among them. As soon as one of them entered a heathen country, by imparting the gift of tongues, the Holy Spirit taught him the language without previous study; and inspired him with a perfect knowledge of Divine Truth. Thus he became a Travelling Bible: a Bible and Missionary all in one. In this way Parthians, Medes and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and a vast multitude of others heard in their own tongues the wonderful works of God.

But nations have been converted since the period, when inspiration and the gift of tongues ceased. The way has been this. A few men, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost," have ventured at the hazard of life into a heathen territory. There they have learned the language, and translated parts or the whole of the Bible; and, before the invention of printing, with immense labour they multiplied copies with the pen.

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There, too, they have laboriously preached the Gospel; and the Holy Ghost has given them souls for their hire. Others have come to their help, both in preaching and multiplying the Scriptures. Their converts have at length in great numbers become evangelists. The work has thus prospered; until ultimately the whole nation has renounced its idolatry. It was in this way that Spaniards, French, and Germans, Russians, Danes, and the dwellers in Scandinavia, Scotchmen, Irishmen, and Englishmen first heard in their own tongue of the Love of Him who was born in Bethlehem Judah. Thus, to him who asks, What are the Means of introducing Christ's kingdom; Facts answer, Bibles and Missionaries.

The Scriptures give the same answer. "The Gospel," they tell us, "is the power of God unto salvation."—That St. Paul understood *practically*, and at least as well as we, how the Heathen are to be converted, will not be questioned. He asks with great force, (and I wish that those, who think he was mistaken, would attempt to answer the question,) "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? So therefore," he says, "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."—To usher in this kingdom, St. John says, that he "saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel, to preach unto them that dwell on the earth."—That Christ knew how his kingdom was to prevail, probably no one will question. "Go," he said to his disciples, just as he was ascending to heaven; "Go," he still says to his ministers, and "preach my gospel to every creature." The Gospel of the kingdom, he also tells us, shall be preached in all the world, for this very purpose.

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Reason and Common Sense give the same answer. Men are introduced into Christ's kingdom not *by force*, but *voluntarily*. That which introduces them is *Faith*. Faith, whether we intend by it *Assent to probable evidence*, or *a cordial Trust in the Truth of God*, is an act of the mind resulting originally from knowledge and evidence. In order that any truth may be believed, it must be first known, and the evidence which supports it perceived by the mind, before Faith can, in the nature of the case, exist. The Truths of the Bible must then be known by the Heathen, and their Evidence seen, before they can be brought into Christ's kingdom. But is there any way of communicating truth except *orally;* and *by letters*, i. e. by writing or printing. If it is to be done *by letters;* can any thing better than the Bible be procured for this purpose. If, *orally;* are there any more proper agents than Evangelists or Missionaries.

Does the objector still doubt whether these means are adequate; and wonder that the Bible and Missionaries should produce such strange results;—A story told by St. John will explain the mystery. John informs us that Jesus, passing near to Sychar a city of Samaria, and being wearied with his journey, sat down by the well of Joseph. A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Christ, entering into conversation with her, told her the most secret events of her life, and revealed the thoughts of her heart. Returning into the city, she said to her neighbours, "Come, see a man, who told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"—Here is the true secret. The Omniscient God, who knows the heart of Man, wrote the Bible. In the Bible he has unfolded the human heart; its true character, and most secret thoughts and intents.

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As the image in the mirror answers to the face, so does the heart of man to man. The Missionary learns from the Bible *what the human heart is;* and goes among the Heathen. Surrounded by his savage audience, he stands up, and tells them what is in their hearts. Astonished, like the woman of Sychar, that the stranger should know them so well, each of them says in his conscience, 'Here is a man who has told me all things that ever I did: Is not this man from God.' Here lies the true efficacy of the Bible. It is this, which distinguishes it from all other books. It is this, which makes the foolishness of preaching (where the Bible is really preached) so effectual in saving mankind.

3. What has hitherto been done to bring this kingdom forward?

The thought that eighteen hundred years are gone, since the angels at Bethlehem proclaimed, "Peace on earth and Good will to Man," at the birth of the Saviour; and yet, that three-fourths of mankind have never heard of that Saviour; compels us to admit, that the ways of God are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Yet, however inexplicable this part of the Divine plan may appear; if I mistake not, some important points necessary to the great result have in this way been settled. The native depravity of Man has been fully exemplified. The tendency of sin, to produce ignorance, debasement and misery, has been proved. The fact, that the Heathen when left to themselves have no tendency to reformation, and only grow worse instead of growing better, is put beyond contradiction. The insufficiency of Man in every stage of civilization to devise a system of religion for himself, has been fully developed. The inefficacy of human philosophy to reform enlightened and polished

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nations and make them evangelically virtuous, has been established beyond a doubt. The hope of changing savages into civilized men, by the force of law, by military discipline, or the influence of agriculture and the arts; or by any thing but the Gospel; has been relinquished. Thus the glory of converting the Heathen from sin to holiness will be ascribed not to blood, nor to the will of the flesh, nor to the will of man; but to the Cross of Christ.

Great preparation has been made in the Progress of the World to bring forward this event.—With the exception of the interior of Africa and of New Holland, and of the Northwestern part of America, every country on the globe has been explored. Every considerable nation on the globe has been discovered. Owing to the improvements in navigation, every maritime country is easily accessible. The interests of commerce now unite all maritime countries which are civilized. An active and constant commercial intercourse subsists between the four quarters of the globe. All civilized and almost all barbarous nations, inhabiting the sea-coast, are now extensively devoted to navigation. Ports or trading establishments are now found at convenient distances on the borders of almost every maritime country. Civilized Man is now settled on the sea-coast of nearly every country and every island. The English language, the language which contains more of the elements of civilization and moral reformation than all others united; the language spoken by the two principal Protestant nations, by the two nations which have already done more than all others to bring forward the event in question, and on whose efforts more reliance is placed than on the efforts of the whole world beside; their common language is already

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widely diffused over Europe, Asia, the Asiatic Isles, and America; has begun to spread from the S. and W. over the continent of Africa; and is already to a great extent the commercial language of this world.

Heathen nations to a great extent are subjugated by christian nations. All the North of Asia is now an integral part of the Russian empire. Christians at St. Petersburg can in this way act with ease not only on Kamtchatka and all the intervening regions, but on Armenia, Persia, Independent Tartary, and the empire of China. The subjugation of Hindoostan has opened the way for British learning and industry to translate the Bible into all the languages of Asia. That country is also a central point of means and of efforts for the annexation of that whole continent to the kingdom of Christ. Sierra Leone, the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, that of Port Jackson, and the Isle of France are similar stations; from which the servants of Christ can act with ease and effect on Africa, New Holland, and Madagascar.

The African slave-trade, that foulest blot on the character of this sinful world, is nearly exterminated. Great Britain, the United States, Denmark, and France, have prohibited it altogether. Spain has already prohibited it North of the Equator, and is pledged by treaty to give it up entirely after the first of May 1820. Portugal will then be the only power which permits it. No doubt the time is near when that country also will relinquish it, voluntarily, or by compulsion.

One important result has arisen from the Slave Trade. Not less than two millions of Negroes are found in this christian country; and at least an equal number in the West Indies, and Guiana. In the three countries, many thousand blacks are converted to the

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religion of Christ, and numbered among his devoted followers. Out of these African converts, the Church will select the future missionaries to Africa. For the conversion of no heathen population has so broad a foundation been laid. When this great work is begun in earnest, "Cush will make haste to stretch out her hands unto God."

The inventions of paper and printing are a substitute for the gift of tongues and the power of working miracles. The sciences of astronomy, natural philosophy, chemistry, and mineralogy, are now based on certainty; and, with the various mechanic arts, are advanced to a high degree of perfection. The facility with which mankind can be fed and clothed and furnished with the necessaries and comforts of life, owing to the many improvements in agriculture, the introduction of machinery in manufactures, and the diffusion of the cotton-plant, is wonderfully increased. The construction of roads, and canals and the establishment of post-offices, facilitate the internal intercourse of all civilized countries. The Lancasterian system of education is making its way through Great Britain, Russia, Germany, France, and Hindoostan, and in no distant period will pervade the habitable globe.

The right of mankind to govern themselves has begun to be understood; and the claims of hereditary despotism, to be doubted. Our own country has had the honour of teaching mankind, that the great end of government is not the aggrandizement of individuals, but the good of the people at large. These principles are making a silent but sure progress on the European continent.

The present state of Europe compels its population in great numbers to plant themselves in regions yet

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unexplored. Every field that is cleared, every road that is built, every tree that is felled, makes way for the coming of Christ.

Several important events have occurred in the Mohammedan world. The harmony originally subsisting between the Mohammedans of Turkey and Persia has long ceased. The Persians are now in great numbers infidels, as to the Koran and Mohammed. An extensive defection from the Mohammedan faith has taken place in the eastern part of Arabia. About thirty years since, Wahabee a prince of that region abjured that religion. Eastern Arabia has since followed his example. A momentary check has indeed been given to the power of the leader of this apostasy by the late victory of the Turks. But the light of Truth is making a sure progress; and the whole of that region may be viewed as rescued from the thraldom of the Impostor. In Western Persia near Shiraz, another apostasy began about twelve years since. Its adherents are called *Sophis*, and exceed 80,000 in number. They have openly renounced Mohammedanism, abolished circumcision, established separate places of worship, and adopted a peculiar dress to distinguish them from Mohammedans. It is an important fact also that the bulwark of the Mohammedan religion, the Ottoman empire, now lies at the mercy of its two powerful neighbours. Its overthrow, which is probably not distant, will crush the faith of the false Prophet, and open western Asia to every christian invader. Like "an ensign on the mountains of Israel," it will also summon the scattered tribes of Judah and Ephraim to that land, which christian prophesy allows us again to call "the Land of Promise."

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For 150 years the power and resources of the Romish Church have been drying up, and by the French Revolution have been nearly exhausted. The vast funds formerly belonging to the Mission college at Rome; by which the numerous missions in North and South America, in Western and Eastern Asia, and on the coast of Africa were supported; are spent. The Head of that Church, once the arbiter of Europe, is now the head of a petty principality in Italy. Even that is left him by sufferance.

The ascendency of the Catholic Church in the East is finally lost. Its influence in the South of Germany and in France is to a great degree destroyed. The existing insurrections in South America bid fair to deliver that continent finally from the influence of Popery.

The danger of power and wealth to the church of Christ, and of any connexion with civil government, has been dreadfully exhibited in the Church of Rome, in the Lutheran Church, in the churches of Switzerland and Holland, and in those of England and Scotland. In most countries where Establishments exist, the dissenters from the established religion now constitute a large proportion, and in some more than half, of the population. The end of Establishments is drawing nigh.

By a comparison of Manuscripts, with immense expense and labour, the genuine Text of the Hebrew and Greek of the original Testaments has in almost every instance been permanently settled. *What the Bible*, the Statute Book of the Redeemer's Kingdom, *is*, was a point necessary to be settled before the full establishment of that Kingdom.

The great controversy of the Church with Infidelity has been waged for the last two centuries. It is

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now over. Infidels, as such, are driven from the field; and the outworks of Christianity are found to be impregnable.

The Antinomian controversy is decided. No man ventures to contend, that christians are not bound to obey God, but are at liberty to sin because Christ died.

The same is true of the Arminian controversy. That Man is justified solely by faith in the righteousness of Christ; that Man is free and accountable, while God orders all things according to the counsel of his own will; and that it is the duty of every impenitent sinner immediately to comply with the commands of the Gospel; are truths now seen to be written in colours of light.

Only one great controversy is now waging. That is to determine, Who the Redeemer is; What is the efficacy of his Death; and What is the Salvation which he accomplished for mankind. The means of deciding this controversy are fully in the possession of the Church. It has already spread extensively over Christendom. Wherever it begins, the contending parties meet each other, at first, on the ground of the Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures. That ground being admitted; the question has been, *What have the Scriptural writers taught us on these subjects?* Ultimately this ground has been left. The plenary inspiration of the Scriptures has been denied; and the ground taken has been, *that the Scriptural writers in teaching these doctrines were mistaken.* This has long been the attitude of the controversy, in the country most distinguished for critical investigation of the true meaning of the Scriptures. The minor controversy, respecting the duration of Future Punishment, is extensively blended with this: almost all those who deny the vicarious Atonement of Christ being really Universalists.

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It must needs be, that all these great questions should be thoroughly examined, and the faith of the Church finally settled with regard to them, before the conversion of the Heathen. Otherwise, the same disputes would have agitated *them*. The fact, that most of these controversies are already decided, and that few individuals are wanted to carry on those which are not; leaves the Church at liberty to employ her whole efforts in the conversion of the world.

Within the last twenty years, the Church has done much to bring forward a better day. Within that period the Bible, in whole or in part, has been translated and printed in all the great languages of Asia. The Tartars, the Chinese, the Birmans, the Malayans, the tribes of Hindoostan, the Persians, Arabs and Turks have now the Scriptures in their own language.

More than *one thousand* Bible Societies are now engaged in printing and circulating the Bible, in all the important languages of the world. Twenty years since not one of them was in existence. Vast multitudes of the population, not only in Great Britain Ireland and the United States, but in Russia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Prussia, the Netherlands, the States of Germany, and Bengal, are already contributing to this glorious work. One of these societies is in Paris. The British and Foreign Bible Society have already published, or aided in publishing, the Bible in 118 different languages and dialects.

The increase of Missionary Stations and of Missionaries is unexpectedly rapid. Agreeably to the Missionary Register, the number of Missionary Stations throughout the world, in May 1817, was 143; and in May 1819, 227. At the former period the number

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of Missionaries to the Heathen was 316; at the latter, 467. From still later information we learn that the present number is 578.* At the latter period, Africa and its islands had 85; Asia and its islands 198; the isles of the Pacific 17; America 73; and the West Indies 81.

Missionaries every where meet with encouraging success. This is true in southern and western Africa, in southern India and Bengal, in Greenland, and Labrador, and among the North American Indians. I need not add, that the whole population of Otaheite and the neighbouring isles are now reckoned among christian nations; and that for the prevalence of pure and undefiled religion they appear to be second to no other people.

Numerous Heathen converts are now missionaries. This is true of Greenlanders, Esquimaux, and several North American Indians, of negroes in the United States, the West Indies, and Sierra Leone, and of Hottentots. The number of native missionaries in Hindoostan exceed 50. Several Mohammedans have become preachers; and not less than five Jews, are proclaiming that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

With many missions, schools are connected. Upwards of 1200 children are instructed under the direction of our own missionaries at Bombay; and 700 under those in Ceylon. More than 2000 children are thus educating in Sierra Leone; upwards of 40,000 in Bengal, and more than 6000 under the missionaries of the Church Missionary Society.

Much has already been done to improve the moral condition of Christendom. A more pacific spirit pervades the European family. The monarchs of

* See Note at the end.

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Europe have constituted a Congress, to hear and settle controversies, which a few years since would have embroiled that continent in war. The multiplication and efforts of Peace Societies assist the diffusion of this spirit.

Societies for the distribution of Religious Tracts are one important engine in accomplishing the event in question. Their efforts are happily successful both in Christian and Heathen countries.

Various classes of men once neglected are now the objects of christian benevolence. Churches are erected for seamen in many large sea-ports. Naval Bible Societies are formed. Extensively it is true that vessels which put to sea are supplied with Bibles and Tracts. The poor and ignorant and even the vicious in large cities are beginning to receive religious instruction.

The efforts to enlighten and save the rising generation promise most important results. National institutions, for the education of the whole mass of children in a nation, already exist in some of the largest kingdoms in Europe. Sabbath-schools furnish to the children of the poor the most salutary instruction. They authorize us to hope that the rising generation will be far less deformed by vice, and in far greater numbers evangelically virtuous, than those who have gone before them.

While employed in these exertions for the good of others, the Church has itself grown better. Love to the Heathen and to Christ has increased brotherly love among Christians. In circulating the Bible they meet on common ground, and are beginning to be ashamed of the jealousies which have separated them. The true nature of Christian Catholicism is beginning

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to be understood; and its spirit, to prevail. Distinctions in names and forms and administrations, are felt to be of less importance. Various denominations already commune together at the sacramental table; and those who do not are relaxing in their rigidness. While the great divisions of the Church are thus growing truly liberal towards each other, they unite more cordially than ever in opposing fundamental error. The line of demarcation, which the Church is now drawing, is between those who admit the doctrines of human depravity, vicarious atonement, regeneration, and the influence of the Holy Spirit, and those who reject them. The former she acknowledges, the latter she disowns, as her children.

A spirit of grace and supplication has been poured out extensively on the whole church of Christ. The Monthly Concert for prayer unites christians of every denomination, and in every quarter of the globe. Confidence in God as a prayer-hearing God is becoming one of the strongest features in the character of the Church.

Within the last 25 years, Revivals of Religion have been greatly multiplied; particularly in our own happy country. They have been unusually extensive, and have prevailed not only in congregations, but in schools, academies and colleges. The remarkable events of this nature, which have been consequent upon the exertions of Missionaries, ought not to be forgotten. The two bright spots of this world at this moment, those which are most strongly illumined with the light of heaven, are Otaheite and Sierra Leone.

The establishment of Theological Seminaries is an important feature of the present day. Five such seminaries have been founded by the Independent

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Church in England; and several more by the English Baptists. Two of a still superior character exist in our own country; and three others have been founded. These institutions are the Nurseries of the Church. It ought to be added that those religious denominations, which have heretofore preferred the labours of an illiterate ministry, are beginning to see their error and to renounce it. When their clergy shall have generally become men of learning; the jealousies and prejudices of which ignorance is the fruitful parent will vanish; the spirit of proselytism and the dishonourable and unchristian conduct to which it uniformly leads, will cease; and the separating wall between them and other denominations will be broken down.

In this great work, the whole Church is engaging. The Greek Church has already printed the Scriptures in 23 languages; and the Head of the Russian Empire has publicly declared it "to be a sacred duty, to cause the benign rays of the Gospel to enlighten the uttermost parts of the earth." The Dissenters of England have 106 missionaries among the Heathen, the English Church 111, the English Baptists 58, the Wesleyan Methodists 69; the United Brethren 155, the American Board of Commissioners 42, and the American Baptist Board 10.*

All these churches with many of those on the continent are united in printing and circulating the Bible. In this glorious work the churches of England and Russia are preeminent.

A new field of beneficence is opening in the American Church. In consequence of the revivals of religion with which she has been blessed, great numbers of our young men have been added to our

* See Note at the end.

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churches. Many of these are indigent, and yet have talents. These are the sons of the Church; and she is training them up for God. The principal society of this nature has already upwards of 200 young men, whom it is thus educating, and other societies upwards of 100 more; exclusive of 250 now educating in our Theological Seminaries.

Thus the whole church has begun to act as if she saw the day approaching. Viewed as a beginning, the effort is a great one. If in the last 20 years, when no foundation had been laid, so much has been done; what may we not expect in the next 20. Into what known language will not the Bible be translated. How many millions of Bibles will be circulated. How many thousands of young men will be educated for the ministry. How many heralds will go forth to proclaim to Heathens Mohammedans and Jews salvation by the Cross. How many hundreds of thousands of their children will be taught at Missionary schools. How many, now Heathens Mohammedans or Jews, will then be preachers of the Gospel. How many churches will during that interval be formed. How many revivals of religion will refresh the Church. What multitudes in many lands will be renewed in the image of God. And how will the church grow in righteousness, in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

4. Can the requisite means be furnished.

The requisite Means are Bibles and Missionaries, attended with the influences of the Holy Spirit.

In christian countries one preacher is usually wanted for 1000 inhabitants; but a far less proportion of missionaries is wanted for the conversion of the Heathen. Were one missionary sent forth for every 40,000 souls, 15,000 missionaries would be employed

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among the 600 millions to whom Christ is not preached. The annual expense of such a number of young men educating for missions would not exceed two millions of dollars. When employed as missionaries it would not exceed nine millions. The annual income of the people of this country according to the best estimates exceeds 300 millions of dollars. Is it asked whether they could spare *a fifteenth part of a tythe of their income* during the nine years of their education, or *a third part of a tythe*, afterwards?

Upwards of 20 millions of dollars we consume annually for spirituous liquors. Could not a ninth part of this sum be spared.

Let us notice what a few individuals might do in this great work. The Kingdom of Persia has 20,000,000 of people, and would need 500 missionaries. The annual expense of educating these young men would be 50,000 dollars. Should only *four individuals* who have that income, retaining three-fourths of it to themselves, spare each *only one fourth* to Him who gave them all; the work would be done.

The mere *interest* of the money, wasted in the late war by England and this country, would educate and support all the Missionaries, and furnish all the Bibles, necessary to convert the world. O that the two nations might unite in paying the *interest* of that sum, in raising unnumbered millions to heaven; of which they squandered the *principal*, in destroying each others' property and lives, and sending many thousands to perdition!

5. On Whom is God calling to furnish the requisite means for this purpose?

Not on the 600 millions, to whom Christ has not yet been preached as the Saviour of sinners. The

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great body of them do not know, and the rest do not believe, that God has provided a Saviour for this ruined world—Not on the Catholic Church. With few exceptions Catholics do not know that the work of converting the world is going on. That Church, also, is more hostile to the coming of Christ's kingdom than the Heathen themselves.

The Greek Church is called upon. She hears the call. But her children are sunk in deplorable ignorance. They want the Bible themselves; and as yet but very few of them know how to read it. The duty which that Church owes to herself, to the compact population of Eastern Europe and to the scattered hordes of northern Asia, will nearly occupy her whole attention.

The Lutheran Church is dreadfully rent by controversy, and corrupted by heresy. Still her cooperation is demanded. The Church of Holland may be expected ultimately to wake from her long slumber, and share anew in the triumphs of the Cross. The poverty and declension of the Church of Switzerland forbid us to hope, that she will come to the help of that Saviour, whom she so extensively disowns. The Church of Scotland is bound to do much. Unhappily she has suffered during the last fifty years a too perceptible declension in purity of faith and manners. Yet we remember with pleasure one important mission, which she has established near the western shores of the Caspian.

But there are two churches on whom the call of Christ is loud and imperative: the Church in England and the Church in America. The Christians of England hear the call and answer it *in Bibles*. They will have the honour of translating the Scriptures into

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almost all the languages of Asia. Turkey, Tartary, the Arab world, Persia, Hindoostan, Birmah, Malaya, China, and probably Japan will owe to her their versions of the Bible. Her ships scour every sea, and visit every port; and a part of their cargoes, now, *is Bibles for the Heathen.* Bibles, she furnishes to the destitute regions of Europe. Bibles, she sends by sea to the shores of the Mediterranean, to the southern kingdoms of Asia, and to the isles of the Indian and the Pacific.

Not less distinguished are the *Missionary exertions* of English Christians. Of the 467 missionaries, employed in May of the last year among the Heathen, 330 were sent forth by them; and of the 227 missionary stations, 170 were planted by Englishmen. That the Church in England has not sent even a greater number of missionaries, has been owing less to the want of funds, than to the want of men with the spirit of evangelists, who could be spared from her own bosom. Hitherto she has had no extensive revivals of religion. Her young men of piety are not found in great numbers, who are eager to be qualified for this great work.

In the work of distributing the Bible, except to her own children and to the American Continent at large, the Church in America seems to have little to do. She owns no country in Asia where she may station herself for this purpose. But for the other part of this great work she is preeminently qualified. Her flag, also, whitens every wave and visits every shore. On her the Spirit of life has been poured out; and thousands of her youths have been just called into the kingdom of Christ. God in his providence says to the American Church, "Whom shall I send to the

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Heathen, and who shall go for us?" And these young men rise up and say, "Lord here are we; Send us." Here lies the duty of the Church of America. She alone is able to furnish in the requisite numbers the Missionaries of the Cross. The call of God on this subject is distinct and loud. It bids her train up, and send forth, these heralds of salvation to the nations sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. The Church of America has begun to listen to the call, and is waking up to life and action. And she will listen to it with deeper and yet deeper attention, until the Gospel is preached in the synagogue, the mosque, and the heathen temple; until there is neither Mohammedan nor Heathen, neither Jew nor Gentile, but all are one in Christ Jesus.

The subject naturally suggests the following Remarks.

1. We may here learn to place a just estimate on the character and employment of the Christian Missionary.

Many respectable men express a decided opposition to Missions. Let us inquire whether this opposition is just. That it is desirable that the Heathen should be converted to Christianity, will be denied by no man who offers the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come!" That to this end the Bible and the Heathen must in some way be brought together, and they made to understand it, will also be admitted. If the Heathen are to receive the Bible; it must first be translated into their own language. Who will learn their language for this purpose, and then translate the Scriptures into it? Are any persons willing to do this except Missionaries.

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If we suppose the Bible translated; how, then, shall the Bible and the Heathen be brought together. The great body of the Heathen cannot read. Who shall instruct them. Can we find any instructors except Missionaries and the schoolmasters who accompany them.

If we suppose them taught to read; how then shall the Bible and the Heathen be brought together? Will your captains and supercargoes undertake this office? Will they consent not only to carry out cargoes of Bibles to the ports of Asia; but will they also penetrate into the interior of Hindoostan, and Birmah, and China, and Tartary, to distribute them from house to house? Can any persons be procured to do this part of the work except Missionaries.

If we suppose a Bible in each Heathen family; how shall they be persuaded to read it, and to believe in the religion of Christ. In Christendom, the constant and laborious efforts of ministers of the Gospel do not persuade the body of the people to search the Scriptures, nor cordially to embrace the christian religion. Are the Heathen so much better than the inhabitants of christian countries, and so destitute of prejudices in favour of their own idolatry, that without the preaching of the Gospel they will receive the truth as it is in Jesus? If not; the Gospel must be *preached* to the Heathen, if they are to receive it. "How *can* they hear without a preacher?"

How then shall the Gospel be preached to the Heathen. Will you import Heathen youths from the various Heathen nations, and educate them? If you do: will they certainly become christians? If they do not; will they be desirable preachers of the Gospel? If they do; and become preachers, and you send them

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home; will they not then be *Missionaries*, and liable to all the objections which you now make against men of this character?

But it is said, "We are not all converted ourselves. Let us first make Christians of our own countrymen, and then of the Heathen."—Has there ever then been a country, the majority of whose inhabitants were real christians; and is this to be hoped of our own, before the arrival of a better day? If the Apostles and their successors had remained at Jerusalem, until the whole population of that city had become christians; when would christianity have begun to be preached to the nations of the earth? Would Buchanan and Marsden, would Carey and Marshman and Ward, have done as much for the Church, and been the means of conversion to as many souls by remaining in England, as by going to the East. How vast the difference in the course of the present generation; how amazing in the progress of a century. Can you not then, in contemplating the subject of SALVATION; have sufficient magnanimity to overlook geographical bounderies?

May not the Missionary plead high authority to sanction his enterprize. Was not JESUS CHRIST a Missionary; employed most laboriously in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom in the cities and villages of Judea? Were not the Apostles and Evangelists, and all the early preachers, Missionaries? Did not Missionaries convert our ancestors to the christian faith; and are not we thus indebted for our Bibles and our religion to the labours of Missionaries?

Is there any thing in the life of a Missionary to induce you to doubt his sincerity. Does he not give up friends, country, influence, and social enjoyments, to pass his life in a savage land preaching CHRIST CRUCIFIED

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to the Heathen. What is there in such a life for an insincere or wicked man to covet.

But is there nothing in his enterprize to command your admiration. When you behold him a voluntary exile, cut off from the comforts of civilized life, crossing oceans and continents, braving the dangers of an unhealthy climate, and roaming through wilds and deserts, not for himself, but to save his fellow-man; cannot your heart enter into his feelings, and say that they are generous and brave? And when you see him regarding Man in every climate as his brother, and spending a life of toil in endeavouring to raise him to glory and honour and immortality; where can you point me to a benevolence so pure, so expansive, so noble as this?

2. We learn that the Church does not keep pace with the providence of God in bringing forward the kingdom of Christ.

How many fields are now white for the harvest! Thousands of young men of the requisite talents, within a few years past, have in our own country been converted to God. Every one of them ought to be educating for the ministry. Christ says to the Church, "Take these children and nurse them for me; and I will pay thee thy wages." The waste places of our ancient settlements have none to build them up. And the vast population of the West are scattered like sheep without a shepherd.

The poor blacks in the South are famishing for the bread of life. Africa is open to every christian invader. Even now she is stretching out her hands unto God. We have many Africans in our own territories who are christians. We too are more implicated, than most other nations, in the guilt of the slave-trade, and

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the miseries which have been brought on Africa. To send her the Book of life, and her own children as the messengers of salvation; is the very atonement which God is calling on us to make

Look at "the seven churches of Asia;" the candlestick of none of them yet removed out of its place; but no candle burning in them for centuries. How should the American Church rejoice to supply them with pastors. Look at one million of Armenian christians, two editions of the Bible just printed for them; and they just beginning to welcome it to their hearts. Could we send but *ten* missionaries into Armenia; in the lapse of ten years might we not hope for hundreds of Armenian evangelists, to publish salvation not only to their countrymen but to all the followers of Mohammed. The Armenians are the merchants of Asia. Their caravans pass from Smyrna to the borders of China. A mission established at Erivan might act with ease and with effect on all the regions of Central Asia.

Look at that numerous body of men in western Persia, who without the Bible have renounced the faith of the Impostor. With what moving eloquence do those eighty thousand cry out to the friends of Jesus, "Come over into Persia, and help us!"—Who that has the spirit of an Evangelist, is not melted to compassion. Whose heart does not burn within him to carry them good tidings of good, to publish salvation, and to say unto Persia, "Thy God reigneth."—Already has the Shah of Persia publicly thanked the Church, for the gift of the Gospel of Jesus in his own language. Already a sacred Divan, convened by order of the Prince, and composed of the principal doctors of the law, with the *Shek al Sellaum* or Mufti at their

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head, in answer to questions formally proposed to them by the Monarch, has solemnly decided *that Jesus Christ is a true prophet sent from God; that the laws contained in the Gospel are just; and that it is not lawful to blaspheme those laws.* Surely a great and effectual door is opened to preach the Gospel in Persia.

We call this the age of religious charities. Compared with her conduct in past ages, the Church has done much. Compared with what ought to have been done, she has done little. If the efforts and contributions of the Church are not prodigiously augmented; the coming of the kingdom of Christ will be postponed for thousands of years. The munificence of the present age in Bibles is often mentioned. Yet, even now, only *one fourth of a million* of Bibles and Testaments is annually distributed. More than one half of the population of Christendom are now destitute of the Bible. These, with the Jews Mohammedans and Heathens, are an aggregate of more than 700 millions. If we view *one half of this vast number* as adults; according to the present ratio of supply, 1400 years would be wanting to furnish them with Bibles; even if Bibles would last, and men would live, during that long period. But Bibles rarely last thirty years; and in fourteen centuries *forty-two generations* go to the grave and to the judgment.

How far then is the Church behind the footsteps of Providence. Would she but quicken her pace and press forward; what a progress in the work of salvation would at once ensue; what displays of glory might not we ourselves be permitted to behold!

3. In such an age and country as this, what a blessing is Wealth, if devoted to the service of God.

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Bibles and Preachers are the great means of ushering in the kingdom of Christ; and, strange to tell, Bibles and preachers can be procured by wealth. Wealth will print Bibles, will educate young men of piety, and support Missionaries. How much good may not a few wealthy individuals do. Nay how much have not a few individuals done before our eyes. In the Theological Institution in this neighbourhood about two hundred young men have been prepared for the preaching of the Gospel. These are proclaiming the offers of salvation to two hundred thousand lost sinners. Each year that institution now furnishes forty additional preachers of the Gospel; and the time is probably not distant when it will annually yield one hundred. The number of preachers, whom it will send forth in the ensuing ten years, will unquestionably exceed five hundred. Ten years hence, then, *more than seven hundred thousand immortal beings* will be furnished with the preaching of the Gospel by its founders. Under these seven hundred preachers, how many revivals of religion will take place; how many thousands of young men will be renewed by the Holy Spirit; and thus be preparing to preach the Gospel in their turn. Thus every year will swell the tide of good. In the progress of a single century, how many millions will owe to them their salvation. And when they hear the story told, and the names of their benefactors recited; they will rise up and call them blessed. Throughout millennial ages, their memory will be sweet; and in the Final day, what a countless multitude, while they give to God all the glory, will yet acknowledge that, to these men under God, they owe their possession of eternal life. What,

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my brethren, is an estate, an empire, a world, to such a prospect as this! And O! can men of wealth, when God is calling on them to labour *with him* in this field of glory, can they be unwilling to engage. When such a summons comes to them in the name of Christ; will not the heart instinctively reply, "Lord here I am; and here is my estate. It cost thy precious blood to ransom me from death. Take what thou wilt: All that I have and am is thine."

But we need not be rich, Brethren, to aid the coming of this kingdom. The rule of the Scriptures on this subject is clear, and it is right. Every man is to give, "as God hath prospered him." The rich are to cast in of their abundance; the poor, of their poverty. If we have but two mites to cast into the treasury; God will accept it, "according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not." If we have nothing else, we have *hearts*. We can earnestly desire the extension of the reign of Christ; and if we thus desire it, we shall earnestly pray for it.

Brethren, it involves no trifling responsibility, to live in such a day as this. It is the day of decision. The kingdom of Satan is overturning; and the kingdom of Jesus is rising on its ruins. It is not a time to be idle. The god of this world will not give up his empire without a struggle. Christ calls for great and united efforts from his people. Every effort which they make, he seconds, and crowns with great success. A few more years, and the kingdom of Christ shall stretch from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. Our children's children may see the day, when the heathen are given to him as his

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inheritance; and the uttermost parts of the earth, for his possession. While we indulge this blessed hope, and are looking for the glorious appearing of the great God even our Saviour Jesus Christ; let us unite our hearts, and say, "Even so, Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly, Amen!"

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NOTE.

The following Abstract of the number of Missionaries and of Missionary Stations is derived from three Surveys of Protestant Missions throughout the world, published in the Evangelical Magazine, and Missionary Register, for the years 1817, 1818, 1819.

	Missionaries.			*Missionary Stations.*		
AFRICA.	1817.	1818.	1819.	1817.	1818.	1819.
Western Africa, - -	16	18	26	7	12	12
Southern Africa, - -	32	44	56	11	19	20
Total. - - - - -	48	62	82	18	31	32
AFRICAN ISLANDS.						
Madagascar, - - - -	2	2	2	1	1	1
Mauritius, - - - -	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total. - - - - -	3	3	3	2	2	2
EUROPE.						
Constantinople, - -	0	0	1	0	0	1
Malta, - - - - -	2	4	4	2	2	2
Total, - - - - -	2	4	5	2	2	3
ASIA.						
Palestine, - - - - -	0	0	2	0	0	1
Karass, - - - -	2	2	2	1	1	1
Astrachan, - - - - -	2	3	4	1	1	1
The Steppe near Astrachan,	2	2	2	1	1	1
Sarepta, - - - -	2	2	2	1	1	1
Orenberg, - - - - -	3	3	3	1	1	1
Irkutsk, - - - -	0	2	4	0	1	2
China, - - - - -	1	1	1	1	1	1
Thibet, - - - - -	0	0	1	0	0	1
Malacca, - - - - -	3	4	7	1	1	1
Birman Empire, - -	2	2	2	1	1	1
Hindoostan, - - -	92	100	126	41	50	59
Total. - - - - -	109	121	156	49	59	71

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	Missionaries.			*Missionary Stations.*		
ASIATIC ISLES.	1817.	1818.	1819.	1817.	1818.	1819.
Ceylon,	18	28	32	7	10	19
Java,	5	4	6	2	3	3
Amboyna,	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total.	25	34	40	11	15	24
AUSTRAL ASIA.						
New South Wales,	1	1	1	1	1	1
New Zealand,	3	3	7	1	1	1
Total.	4	4	8	2	2	2
POLYNESIA.						
Society Isles,	16	17	17	2	2	2
S. AMERICA.						
Guiana,	13	17	19	6	8	9
N. AMERICA.						
N. American Indians,	9	8	27	5	5	13
Labrador,	16	15	17	3	3	3
Greenland,	7	10	10	3	3	3
Total.	32	33	54	11	11	19
WEST INDIES.						
Hayti,	2	2	3	1	2	2
Danish Islands,	7	15	14	7	7	7
Bermuda,	2	1	1	1	1	1
Bahamas,	6	4	4	4	4	4
Jamaica,	13	14	19	8	12	14
Virgin Isles,	3	3	3	2	2	2
Antigua,	10	13	12	5	7	10
Barbadoes,	3	3	3	2	2	3
St. Kitts,	6	6	6	2	2	2
St. Barts,	1	1	1	1	1	1
St. Vincents,	3	4	3	1	1	1
Dominica,	1	1	2	1	1	2
Grenada,	2	1	2	1	1	1
Nevis,	2	2	3	1	1	2
Trinidad,	2	3	3	2	2	2
Tobago,	0	1	1	0	1	1
St. Eustatius,	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total.	64	75	81	40	48	56
RECAPITULATION.						
Africa,	51	65	85	20	33	34
Europe,	2	4	5	2	2	3
Asia,	134	155	198	60	74	95
America,	109	125	154	57	67	84
Austral Asia,	4	4	8	2	2	2
Polynesia	16	17	17	2	2	9
Grand Total.	316	370	467	143	180	227

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The following Abstract from the same Surveys, exhibits the number of missionaries employed by the various Missionary Societies in the years 1817, 1818, and 1819; and the number of Missionary Stations then founded.

	Missionaries.			*Missionary Stations.*		
	1817.	1818.	1819.	1817.	1818.	1819.
Soc. for prom. Chris. Knowledge,	7	6	6	3	3	3
Soc. for prop. Gos. N Am. Ind.	4	4	5	2	2	3
Wesleyan Missions, began	52	64	69	29	39	45
Bapt. Missionary Soc. began 1792,	59	53	58	24	25	27
London Mission. Soc. began 1795,	72	85	106	32	39	45
* Church Miss. Society, 1800,	38	53	80	17	32	44
Conversion of Negro Slaves Soc.	0	0	6	0	0	3
Total by England. - -	232	265	330	107	140	170
Edinburgh Missionary Society,	7	8	11	3	3	4
Royal Danish Mission College,	3	3	3	1	1	1
* United Brethren, began 1732,	65	85	84	29	33	36
Netherland Miss. Society,	0	0	2	0	0	1
* Am. Board C. F. M. began 1810,	7	7	27	2	2	10
Am. Baptist Board, - -	2	2	8	1	1	5
Grand Total. - - -	316	370	465	143	180	227

The following paragraphs close the late Report of the A. B. C. F. M. Several of the assistants were not actually sent out, when the Report was made; but were waiting for orders to join the missions, to which they were destined. A considerable number of assistants are now waiting for the means of being sent into fields already white to the harvest.

THE Board has now under its direction, and dependant upon its funds, twenty three MISSIONARIES, and as many ASSISTANTS in the different parts of the work,—sacredly devoted to the service for life;—with thirty five FEMALE HELPERS of like spirit. In its Mission Families and schools it has from two to three thousand heathen children and youth under Christian Instruction; of whom from two to three hundred are also chiefly supported from its funds.—The numbers are continually increasing; the operations are extending; and the necessary expenditures are multiplying and augmenting. If our nation—if American Christians—have

* *By more recent intelligence we learn, that the number of Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society is now* 105; *that of the United Brethren* 155; *and that of the American Board of Commissioners* 42, *exclusive of* 34 *females. These additions make the present number of Missionaries* 576. *We trust that in May of the present year the number will be double what it was in May,* 1817.

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been long under the guilt of *robbing God;* most favorable opportunities are now afforded to them, and most powerful motives are presented,—if not for cancelling their irredeemable arrears,—yet for *bringing their tythes, as they are constantly falling due, into his store house,* with punctuality, and in full amount; and making their *free will offerings* with largeness and gladness of heart. It should be the devout prayer and endeavor of every lover of his country, of every friend to the best interests of mankind, that the guilt be not accumulated and aggravated, by neglect of the opportunities and disregard of the motives.

The command, never to be forgotten is—Go YE INTO ALL THE WORLD, AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE. By Christians and Christian Ministers the command must be fulfilled.—THE GOSPEL MUST BE SENT—AND PREACHED—TO EVERY NATION AND FAMILY ON EARTH. This is the duty of Christians:—to render it effectual to the conversion of every nation and family—is not required of them. Let them obediently do *what is required;* and humbly wait on Him, with whom is the residue of the Spirit, to command the blessing. *He will not be slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness.*

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5.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

FOURTH ANNIVERSARY,

OF THE

AUXILIARY EDUCATION SOCIETY,

OF THE

YOUNG MEN OF BOSTON,

FEBRUARY 12, 1823.

BY JUSTIN EDWARDS,
PASTOR OF THE SOUTH CHURCH, ANDOVER.

ANDOVER:
PRINTED BY FLAGG & GOULD.
1823.

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SERMON.

NEHEMIAH VI. 3.

I AM DOING A GREAT WORK, SO THAT I CANNOT COME DOWN.

This was the answer of Nehemiah, to those who would hinder him from finishing the walls of the holy city. The time had come, when Jerusalem must be rebuilt. Its walls must be completed, and the worship of God again established on Mount Zion. Much had already been done. But, on account of the greatness of the work, the weakness, and timidity of its friends, and the number and strength of its opposers, it was not completed.

Nehemiah was, in the providence of God, raised up to finish it. And, as God, when he raises up instruments, fits them for their work, Nehemiah was exactly such a man as was, at that time, needed. He was pious, wise, bold, active, and persevering. His ruling passion was love to God; and his distinguishing characteristicks were confidence in him, regard for his glory, and devotion to his will. When he looked over the desolations of Zion, he was pained to the very heart. And, although surrounded with the splendours of a court, he could not rest, till he had made a grand effort to restore her prosperity.

By deep repentance, and humble prayer, he secured

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the guidance, and blessing of God. He then took an extended view of the work, and of the means by which he could accomplish it. He also examined the difficulties which he must encounter, and the means by which he could overcome them. He then communicated his designs to his brethren, and persuaded them to engage, with him, in the work. He believed that it was the work of God, and that it ought to be done. He believed that it *could* be done. And, in the strength of God, he resolved to do it. Under his skilful guidance, his daily prayers, and active labours, the work went forward, and prospered.

But the enemies of this work, when they saw that it *prospered*, were exceedingly enraged, and resolved, if possible, to hinder it. The means which they, at first, selected, were ridicule, and reproach.

They laughed them to scorn; and said, 'What do these feeble Jews? Will they fortify themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they revive the stones out of the rubbish, and build the walls of a city? If a fox go up on their wall, he will break it down.'

But Nehemiah went forward with his work. All the ridicule and contempt which they could pour upon him, only increased his ardour. He saw new evidence that the work was of God. And he said to his companions, "The God of heaven will prosper us."

His enemies, then, determined to frighten him. They accused him and his companions, of rebellion, threatened to come up and kill them, and thus cause the work to cease. But Nehemiah was not afraid. He could say, "They that be with us are *more* than they that be with them." "Be not afraid of them," said he to his companions, "but remember the Lord, which is great and terrible." He was not afraid, when engaged for God, to rely

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on his protection; and, in the path of duty, to go forward, and leave the consequences with him. And his enemies saw that all their counsels came to naught.

They then attempted to accomplish their object, by stratagem. They expressed a great desire to have an interview with Nehemiah; and see if the matter could not, in a friendly manner, be adjusted. They sent messengers, and earnestly entreated him to come down, and meet them in some one of the villages, in the plains of Ono; supposing that if they could only persuade him to come down, they could cause the work to cease. But he knew too well the effect of parleying with enemies, to think of yielding to their request. He therefore sent messengers to them, saying, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down." And they sent to him again; but he returned the same answer. And they sent to him again, and again; but he returned the same answer.

And the hand of his God was upon him for good, and upon all that laboured with him. He heard their prayers, and blessed their exertions. No obstacles could hinder them, from going forward with their work; and no efforts of enemies could prevent their progress. They continued diligently employed; and the work continued to prosper, until it was finally completed. Then their enemies were cast down in their own eyes; for *they* too perceived that the work was of God. One important truth is here illustrated.—A good man, when engaged in a great work, will not leave it.

Let us apply this truth to the present occasion.

A work is truly great, and in the noblest sense, which has for its object, the glory of God, in the salvation of men: and which, if pursued, will *promote* this object. And a work is great, just in proportion, as it promotes this object.

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Measured by this standard, the work in which the Auxiliary Education Society of the young men of Boston are engaged, is truly a *great* work.

Its grand object is the glory of God, in the salvation of men. It is more intimately connected with this object, than was the work in which even Nehemiah himself was engaged. You are raising up instruments, not indeed for the building of an earthly city, although the city of God, and the place of his habitation; but you are raising up instruments for the building of the New Jerusalem, that holy city, which St. John saw coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride, adorned for her husband. A voice said unto him, "Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." 'And he was carried away, in the spirit, to a great high mountain, and he saw that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone, most precious, clear as crystal. Her wall was great, and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. And the wall had twelve foundations, and in them, the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the city was twelve thousand furlongs; the length, and breadth, and height were equal. And the wall was of jasper, and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall were garnished with all manner of precious stones. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was paved with pure gold, as it were transparent glass.—And he saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. And it had no need of the sun, nor of the moon; for the glo-

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ry of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.'

Such is the city which the members of this Society are building. It is a city which hath foundations; and of which, the Jerusalem built by Nehemiah, was only a shadow. It is a city which is built of living stones; and which, when all the cities of this world shall have crumbled into ruins, will stand, in all its magnificence, and glory, "an habitation of God through the spirit."

The grand object of this Society, is, to increase the number of *pious*, *able*, and *faithful* ministers of the gospel; who shall spend their days, in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ to their fellow men; ministers who, in temper, and conduct, shall resemble Paul, and all who, in every generation, have followed his example; who have themselves been born of the spirit, who glory in the cross, and by it, are crucified to the world, and the world crucified to them; who determine not to know any thing among their hearers, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified; and who count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus; ministers who will be able to teach others, with the same teaching which they receive from God; who will not shun to declare all his counsel; will keep the faith; not count even life dear to them; and, as the Lord shall open the way, will go forth, into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

To increase the number of such ministers is a great work, because,

I. The labours of ministers are the grand means which God has appointed for the salvation of men.

II. Of these means, a vast portion of men are destitute.

III. By these means, God accomplishes great ends.

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I. The labours of ministers are the grand means which God has appointed for the salvation of men.

Men are in a state of apostasy from God, and, consequently, in a state of moral ruin. A desolation, far more dreadful than that which swept over Jerusalem, when her walls were broken down, her temple demolished, and her houses burnt with fire, has extended over all the children of men.

They have revolted from God, and this revolt is universal and entire. "The Lord looked down from heaven, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." They are following the vain imaginations of their own hearts: and, continuing this course, they must sink into endless ruin.

They therefore *need* salvation. And without salvation, it had been better for them never to have been born. For their existence, if spent in opposition to God, will be spent in weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

But salvation has been provided: and by God himself. He "so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Yes, "The brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person;" who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He suffered, "the just for the unjust; that he might bring us unto God." A way is now opened in which God can be just, and the justifier of every one that believeth. All things are now ready, and whosoever will may come, and take the water of life freely.

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea,

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come, buy wine and milk; without money, and without price." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." "Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." But their reception of this infinite blessing depends upon their turning, each one from his own evil ways. Without this, iniquity will still be their ruin. Hence saith God, "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"

And the grand means of leading men to turn from their evil ways, are the labours of ministers; especially in preaching the gospel.

These are the grand means, which God has appointed, for unfolding the glories of his character, as exhibited on the cross; and holding up, to the view of men, that wonderful system, in which justice and mercy meet together; righteousness and peace, embrace each other.

Not that ministers can, in preaching the gospel, declare any thing, upon this subject, more than is revealed in the Bible; but their labours are the grand means which God has appointed for holding up to the view of men the great *truths* of the Bible; and turning the mental eye toward "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;" that it may see, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

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Hence, the risen Saviour, just before his ascension to glory, having collected his disciples, whom, by his instructions, he had prepared to be ministers, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This was to be the grand means of salvation, to all, in every part of the world, who should believe. Nor was it to be the grand means of salvation, only to men of that generation; but to men of *all* generations.

When the first preachers should be removed by death, others were to be raised up to fill their places. Thus a succession of faithful ministers was to be continued. And to them, said the Saviour, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

This promise has been fulfilled. In simple, and humble dependance on him, the apostles went forth, and preached the gospel. And although to the Jews, who boasted of their wisdom, it was a stumbling block; and to the Greeks, who gloried in their philosophy, it was foolishness; yet to them that were *called*, both Jews and Greeks, it was the power of God, and the wisdom of God. And although the apostles often met with great trials in preaching the gospel, yet they would not desist; for, wherever they went, they found it to be the power of God unto salvation, to all that believed. Many were 'begotten again unto a lively hope.' 'The love of God was shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Ghost,' and, like apostles, 'they counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.'

Every church that was gathered, in that generation, both from among the Jews, and the Gentiles, was gathered through the instrumentality of preaching. They went every where *preaching* the word. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed."

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So has it been, in every age. "Faith cometh by hearing." I do not mean, by this, that no souls were ever converted, simply by means of the Bible; or the writings of pious men. Doubtless some, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, have been brought to repentance and salvation, who never, from the lips of a living preacher, heard a sermon. But these instances, so far as men can discover, appear to be few; comparatively, *very* few.

The Bible, and the writings of pious men appear, ordinarily, to be blessed to the salvation of those only, who hear the gospel. Others may have them in their houses; but they will generally neglect them. Public worship, and the ordinances of the gospel, will be forsaken. The Bible will be left to moulder upon the shelf; and the writings of pious men be forgotten.

These, *alone*, are not the grand means which God has appointed, for the salvation of men. And in the gift of his grace, he honours his *own* means.

Do you say, that the Ethiopian eunuch came to the knowledge of the truth, by the reading of the scriptures? Yes, when returning from publick worship; and a minister was sent, to preach to him the gospel.

But do you say that Cornelius, the centurion of the Italian band, became hopefully pious, without ever having heard the preaching of the gospel? Yet so important was it that he should hear it, that God sent an angel from heaven, to direct him immediately to send for a minister; and he directed that minister, even in a vision, to go, and preach to him. Equally important is the *preaching* of the gospel to other men.

What nation, or body of men, have ever been led to turn from idolatry, to the service of the living God, without the preaching of the gospel? What church has ever

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been gathered, even in Christian lands, without the preaching of the gospel? What body of men have ever been led to remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy; assemble statedly for the worship of God; daily to search the scriptures; pray in their families; train up their children in the nurture, and admonition of the Lord; and walk before them, in the ordinances of the gospel, except those who have heard the *preaching* of the gospel?

What body of men have ever been led to feel that they "are not their own," but "are bought with a price;" and been persuaded, by this, to 'glorify God, in body, and spirit which are his?" What body of men have ever learned to imitate Him who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust?" Who has ever seen a company of Howards; or a single "Howard Benevolent Society," among all the generations, and tribes of men, who have never heard the gospel? What extensive plan of charity ever was known, of any kind, calculated to convey substantial good to men, in any, I might say, even of the concerns of *this* life?" But these I shall omit; for, while I speak it, I see the heavens passing away; and the elements melting down; the earth, and the things of it, burnt up; and all its concerns swallowed up in an opening, and boundless eternity.

Who has ever engaged in the benevolent plan, of making known Jehovah, in that wondrous exhibition of himself, which drew forth from the lips of angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men?" Who has ever engaged in making known God as a *Saviour*, coming down from heaven, "to seek, and to save that which was lost;" and in opening, upon the dying nations, the infinite riches of his grace, except those who have heard the gospel?

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Would our Mahews, and Elliot have gone from island, to island; and spent the day time in traversing the desert, and the night in translating the Bible, if they had never heard the preaching of the gospel?

Would Brainerd have poured out his thousands of supplications in the wilderness, and spent the vigour of his days in bringing wandering pagans back to God, if he had never heard the preaching of the gospel?

Would Swartz, or Carey; Vanderkemp, or Buchanan, have broken into the empire of darkness, and held up to the perishing nations the light of the glorious gospel, if they had never, themselves, *heard* the gospel? Would the gospel itself ever have passed the limits of Judea; or its glad tidings been published to a single Gentile nation on earth, if it had not been done by those who had *heard* the gospel? Search the records of all ages; and you will find that such works of mercy have never been done, except by those who have heard the preaching of the gospel. Search the scriptures; examine the economy of divine grace; look at the promises of God, and see their fulfilment in his providence; and you will find, that such works of mercy never will be done, except by those who hear the gospel.

Nor is this all. Extinguish the light of a living ministry, and let it not be revived, and all christendom will sink into pagan darkness. Bibles, and the writings of pious men, they may continue to have; but if these do not produce influence enough to raise up among them a living ministry, all will soon be locked up in the slumbers of moral death.

This is not because the Bible does not reveal every principle of holy action, which is, or can be, exhibited, by living preachers; and every principle too, which is needed, in order to arouse the whole world; and pour the tide of

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benevolence over all its population. But it is because without living preachers, men have not the grand means which God has appointed for causing the principles of holy action, which are revealed in the Bible, to take possession of the heart; and to govern the life.

The Bible may be sent to every family in the world, yet if they never hear the preaching of the gospel, it will not, by the great mass of people, ever be daily read. Its holy principles will not be received; and its holy commands will not be obeyed. If its principles are examined enough to be understood, they will lodge in the understanding, and not take possession of the heart. They will be viewed as matters of speculation, rather than *felt*, as principles of holy practice.

How is it with those parts of our own country, which once had the light of a living ministry; but in which that light has been extinguished, only for *half* a century? Is there not a great increase of moral darkness? Is not the sabbath almost universally profaned; the worship, and ordinances of God neglected? Do not idleness, dissipation, and iniquity prevail? And even with the sober part of the community; is not the great enquiry, 'What shall we eat; what shall we drink; and wherewithal shall we be clothed?' Who will shew us *earthly* good? And do not the great interests of vital godliness, visibly, and rapidly decline?

In one part of our country there were 16 towns, which were all supplied with settled ministers. Churches were gathered in every town, and many of them were in a flourishing condition. In the mysterious providence of God, they have, within half a century, all been left destitute.

They retained the Bible, and the writings of pious men, in every town. But the great interests of vital religion, visibly, and rapidly declined. Ten years ago there were not

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upon an average 9 members of the church, in a town; although the towns contained, upon an average, nearly a thousand people. In 4 towns, the churches had become extinct. In one of those towns, when they had a settled minister, there was a church of 40 members; and in another, there was a church of more than 60 members. But those members were not suffered to continue, by reason of death. And none arose to fill their places.

At length, the grave closed upon the very last member; and the light, even of a christian profession, was extinguished. One church, not extinct, had had no communion for 5 years. Two other churches, had had none for 20 years. Is it not plain, that they had not the grand means which God has appointed, for awakening men from the slumbers of moral death; and leading them out of darkness, into the light and liberty of his children? Even the passing traveller, in view of the footsteps of depravity, which he every where, witnessed, could not but feel, that the glory had departed: so would it be, without the preaching of the gospel, in every town, in our country; and throughout the world.

Need I add a word, to leave upon every heart the permanent conviction, that you are doing a great work? To immortal beings, in a state of apostasy from God, you are furnishing the grand means, which he has appointed, for their deliverance from eternal perdition; their restoration to his image; and their exaltation to seats of glory at his right hand.

II. Of these means a vast portion of men are now destitute. And without such efforts as you are making, they must *remain* destitute.

All the qualified preachers, in our country, do not amount to more than 3000. These probably do not fur-

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nish, with stated preaching, more than 3,000,000 of people; leaving about 7,000,000 destitute. To supply these, would need 7000 preachers. And the number of preachers, who in the providence of God, have, in times past, been qualified for their work, has, by no means equalled, in proportion, the number who have been removed by death, and the increase of population. So that the number of destitute in our own country, without vastly greater efforts, than have ever yet been made, must continue to increase. Even should the increase of ministers, equal in proportion, the increase of population; and the increase of population be the same as in years past, in 25 years, there will be, in our own country, 14,000,000 destitute of the stated enjoyment, of the grand means of salvation.

Nor is this all. In the unevangelized parts of the world, it has been supposed, there are more than 500,000,000 of souls. And among them all, there are not 500 preachers of the gospel. Yet the preaching of the gospel is appointed, by the God of heaven, to be the means of *their* salvation, as well as of ours. And he has commanded those who have the gospel, to cause it to be preached to them. Yet all the nations of christendom have not furnished them, with one preacher, to a million of souls.

Were there only 10 preachers in the United States, they could supply the whole country with preaching, vastly better than all the missionaries, who are now in the field, can possibly supply the heathen. Even if there were 500 missionaries, and they could each supply with stated preaching, 2000 souls; that would supply only 1,000,000; and leave more than 499,000,000 destitute. And should all christendom furnish them with but one preacher, to every 20,000 souls, it would take 24,500 preachers.

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And is it needful, in this land of Bibles, Sabbaths, and Religious books, that there should be one preacher of the gospel, to every town of 1000 people; in order that they may have the stated enjoyment of the grand means of salvation? And is it not needful that those who have no Bibles, no Sabbaths, and no Religious books should have one preacher of the gospel to 20,000? And in order to do this, the number of preachers, who have gone to the unevangelized nations, must be increased 50 fold. The United States, in order to do their proportion, must furnish, at least, 2000. These, with the 7000 which are needed in order to supply the present population of our own country, must be raised up by the efforts of benevolence. And can this be done? Yes, with the blessing of God, it *can* be done. If only all the *young men* in the United States, should do as much annually as has been done the last year by young men in Boston, they might all be furnished in 20 years.

Are you not then doing a *great* work? You are assisting in furnishing 7,000,000 of your own countrymen, and 40,000,000 of heathen, each possessing an immortal soul, in danger of eternal death, with the grand means, which God has appointed, for their salvation: And assisting too, in a way, which, if only followed by all the young men of our country, would accomplish the object in 20 years. Are you not doing a great work? And does not the voice of God say to every man engaged in it, Move onward? And does not his own heart echo, Onward? If difficulties meet him, and enemies tempt him to draw back, does he not say, *I am doing a great work?* And every voice in heaven echo, A GREAT WORK? It *is* a great work. And not a man that has the spirit of heaven, will ever leave it. For,

III. By the labours of ministers, God accomplishes great ends.

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We have seen that they are, to immortal souls, the grand means of salvation. SALVATION,—who can measure its mighty import? Who can tell the greatness of that deliverance, when a soul is born of God? Who can tell what it is, for an immortal soul, which must exist, as long as God shall exist, to be delivered from inheriting everlasting burnings; changed into the image of God; and raised to dwell with Christ, to see him as he is, and be *like* him forever? O, salvation, even to *one* soul, is a GREAT THING. And every faithful minister, that you raise up, may, with the blessing of God, be the means of salvation, to great numbers.

When Richard Baxter began to preach the gospel, at Kidderminster, there was but about one praying family in a street. The Sabbath was openly profaned; immorality, of almost every kind, prevailed; and the whole town was a scene of moral desolation. Before he had preached there 14 years, in passing the streets on the sabbath, one might hear an hundred families, engaged in family devotion. And in some streets, there were not more than two families that neglected it. The number of communicants, at the Lord's table, was more than 600. And among them all, were not 12 persons who did not give reason to hope that they were born of God. At the same time he was hopefully the means of salvation to numbers in Worcester, Cleobury, Dudley, Sheffield, and many other places; where he occasionally preached the gospel. Several of these, were, afterwards, distinguished ministers of Christ.

Almost every week, he received letters, mentioning instances of hopeful conversion, by means of his "Call to the Unconverted." More than 20,000 copies of this work were printed in a year. It was published not only in England, but in Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Holland, and America. And yet it was believed by himself, and by others, that his "Saint's Rest," had been the means of sal-

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vation to still greater numbers. Portions of his works have been read, in nearly all the protestant countries of christendom, down to this day. And it is not too much to suppose, that there has not been a year since Baxter died, in which his works have not, to some, been the means of salvation. And this, should the Lord so order it, may continue to be the case to the end of the world. Go forward into eternity, and by its everlasting light, look at the greatness of what God accomplished, by means of Richard Baxter.

Do you say that Baxter was a rare example? I grant it. And in this day, when the children of Zion are taking pleasure in her stones, and favouring her dust, you may expect *other* rare examples; and that they will be multiplied, until they shall become *common* examples.

Henry Martyn, before he reached the age of 31, besides preaching the gospel to great numbers, in demonstration of the spirit, and of power, had translated the whole of the New Testament, for the millions of Hindoostan; and also for the millions of Persia.

By the labours of another minister, God has prepared the whole Bible, for the hundreds of millions of China.

And our own countryman, Samuel J. Mills, although he died a young man, lived long enough to be a leading instrument in the formation of a Bible Society in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. And he was also, a leading instrument in the formation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; The United Foreign Missionary Society; The African School; and The American Bible Society; institutions which are extending the word of life, to hundreds of thousands of our fellow men.

But you say, These were missionaries. Missionaries? So, I trust, will be many, whom you are raising up; and

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missionaries, who will explore every dark region under heaven; and spread the light of holiness, "from sea to sea; and from the river to the ends of the earth."

But supposing that not one of them should ever be a missionary; but all should be parish ministers. By the labours of parish ministers, God accomplishes *great* ends.

Thomas Scott was a parish minister. Still he was hopefully the means of salvation to great numbers. Many ministers, he was instrumental in raising up, for the churches at home; and many others he was instrumental in preparing to translate the Bible, and preach the gospel among the heathen. His benevolent labours were instrumental in opening the way for the formation of the Church Missionary Society; and The British and Foreign Bible Society; institutions among the most stupendous which have ever blessed the world; the influence of which will, ere long, be felt from Japan, to California; and from Nova Zembla, to Cape Horn. And though dead, he yet speaks to more than 20,000 families; and tells them words by which they may be saved. And through the blessing of God, he may continue to speak to still greater numbers, of generations yet unborn.

But Scott, you say, was a Commentator. And are you sure that there will be no Commentators, among the men whom you are raising up? Are they not as likely to become such, as he was, at their age? But supposing that there should be no Commentators among them; and not one who shall leave any thing in writing, to speak to the world, after he is dead; still God may accomplish by them, ends, the greatness of which will surpass all finite comprehension.

About 40 years ago, a poor, but pious young man undertook, by his own efforts, and the aid of friends, to obtain an education for the ministry. While he was at college, there was an extensive revival of religion; and it was greatly

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promoted through his instrumentality. Numbers, at that time, became hopefully pious; and are now ministers of the gospel. When prepared, he too became a minister; and his labours have been eminently blessed. The Church, which, at his settlement, consisted of only about 20 members, has now nearly 300. Most of them look to him as their spiritual father. And many of his spiritual children, now sleep in Jesus. He has been greatly blessed also in his occasional labours. Numbers, through an extensive region around him, have, by his means, been brought to the saving knowledge of the truth.

More than 30 he has assisted, in their education, for the ministry. And several of them are now labouring, with distinguished success, in the Churches. Suppose that each of these 30 ministers, should be instrumental, in the conversion of 100 souls; and that 75 out of 100 should become heads of families. Suppose that each minister should also be instrumental, in the course of his life, in raising up three other ministers. Here then are 90 ministers of the gospel; 750 single persons, of hopeful piety; and 2250 pious heads of families. Trace their influence upon the next generation; and their influence upon the generations which shall follow down to the Millennium; and onward till the final consummation. Go up with them, till you reach the summit of the heavenly Zion; and, from the infinite glory, look round upon the greatness of what God accomplishes, by a parish minister. Thirty such ministers may, with the divine blessing, be raised up in 20 years, by *this* Society.

Press onward, Brethren, with your work. Let the love of Christ constrain you to *persevere;* and the greatness of what you, through grace, will accomplish, will be eternally unfolding, to the admiration of men and angels; and all will give the glory to God forever.....AMEN.

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TREASURER'S ACCOUNT.

Auxiliary Education Society of Young Men of Boston, in Account Current with Samuel Coverly Jun., Treasurer. *Dr.*

Jan. to Dec. 1822. To cash paid Sumner Hill's bill, use of Old South Church, Jan. 23. - - - - -	$ 8 00
To cash paid Samuel Wyatt's bill, use of Court Street Hotel Hall, - - - - - - - -	5 00
To Joseph W. Ingraham's bill, printing Sermon, &c.	50 62
To Ezra Lincoln's bill, printing notifications, - -	3 00
To Cash paid Treasurer of American Education Society, as per his receipt, - - - - - -	1000 00
Balance, Cash on hand, - - - - - - -	2 38
	$ 1069 00

Contra, *Cr.*

Jan. 1, *to Dec.* 31, 1822. Balance Cash from old account,	23
Jan. 23. By collection at Old South Church - -	111 27
By sundry other donations - - - - -	403 50
By 15 permanent members - - - - -	150 00
By 8 members for 1821 subscription - - -	8 00
By 248 do. 1822 do. each at $ 1 -	248 00
By 3 do. 1822 do. do. 2 -	6 00
By 2 do. 1822 do. do. 3 -	6 00
By 7 do. 1822 do. do. 5 -	35 00
By 1 do. 1822 do. - - - -	6 00
By 2 do. 1822 do. do. 10 -	20 00
By 3 do. 1822 do. do. 25 -	75 00
	$ 1069 00

Boston, Jan. 1, 1823. Having examined the above account, we find it correctly cast, and properly vouched.

Signed, BENJAMIN SEAVER, JOHN GULLIVER, } *Auditors.*

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CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE I.

THIS Society shall be called the *Auxiliary Education Society of the Young Men of Boston.*

ARTICLE II.

Any person, under thirty-five years of age, who shall subscribe, and annually pay into the treasury, a sum not less than one dollar, shall be a member of this society; and any such person, who shall pay, at one time, a sum not less than ten dollars, or who shall, within any one year, obtain fifteen new members to the society, and become responsible for the payment of their subscriptions for that year, shall be a permanent member.

ARTICLE III.

There shall annually be chosen, by ballot, a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and such other officers as may be found necessary.

ARTICLE IV.

The society shall annually appoint, by ballot, seven directors, who, together with the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, shall constitute a board of directors. It shall be the duty of this board to superintend the concerns of the society, and to devise means to advance its interests. The directors shall meet quarterly, keep a record of their proceedings, and annually make a report to the society. The president, and, in his absence, the vice president, shall have power to call special meetings of the society, and of the board of directors.

ARTICLE V.

The treasurer shall collect the subscriptions of members, which, with donations to the society, he shall annually pay to the treasurer of the "American Education Society."

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ARTICLE VI.

The annual meeting shall be on the first Wednesday of January, to elect officers, to hear the report of the directors and of the treasurer, and to transact other necessary business.

ARTICLE VII.

Any member is at liberty to withdraw from the society, by informing the secretary of his intention, and paying all arrearages.

ARTICLE VIII.

No alteration of this constitution shall be made, except on recommendation of the directors, and by vote of three fourths of the members, present at an annual meeting.

ARTICLE IX.

Every member, who shall pay to the treasurer, during his connexion with the society, the amount of fifty dollars, shall thereby be constituted an honorary member of the board of directors, and shall enjoy every privilege of a director, except the right of voting.

ARTICLE X.

Every member who shall have paid fifteen dollars to the society, and have passed the age prescribed for membership by the second article of the constitution, shall be constituted an honorary member of the society.

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OFFICERS.

WILLIAM P. GREENE, Esq. *President.*
Rev. B. B. WISNER, *Vice President.*
BENJAMIN SEAVER, *Secretary.*
WILLIAM G. LAMBERT, *Treasurer.*

DIRECTORS.

Enoch Hale, M. D., Gilman Prichard, James M. Russell, Charles Stoddard, William Sewall, Aaron Woodman, John Dane.

PERMANENT MEMBERS.

Andrews, J. W.
Andrews, Wm. W.
Andrews, Benj. H.
Bancroft, Jacob
Bean, Elias
Brewster, Osmyn
Bumstead, Josiah F.
Brigham, Dennis
Brown, Valentine O. B.
Bradshaw, Andrew
Crocker, Uriel
Coverly, Samuel jun.
Chamberlain, Levi
Denny, Daniel jun.
Davis, Thomas A.
Dunn, J. C.
Dwight, S. E. Rev.
Ewer, Charles
Eustis, William T.
Fessenden, Stephen
Fessenden, David B.
Gilbert, Dexter
Gray, Francis C.
Greene, William P.
Greene, I. S. Copley
Gorham, Thomas
Hobart, Albert
Hubbard, George L.
Haskell, Ezra
Howard, Benjamin
Hale, David
Hill, Henry
Hill, Henry Martyn
Ingraham, Joseph W.
Johnson, Samuel
Kent, John
Lambert, William G.
Lobdell, Thomas J.
Noyes, Daniel
Norton, Charles E.
Proctor, John C.
Parker, Isaac H.
Parker, Ebenezer G.
Prichard, Gilman
Reed, Hodges
Russell, James M.
Saville, Wm. O.
Sewall, William
Stone, W. W.
Slade, John Jun.
Stoddard Charles
Stillman, Samuel
Seaver, Benjamin
Thayer, Jechonias
Tileston, Otis
Tyler, Nathan
Vose, Thomas
Webster, Ralph
Whitney, Paul
Winthrop, J. Temple
Wisner, Benj. B. Rev.
Wight, Ebenezer
Willey, Newton
Woodman, Aaron

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ANNUAL MEMBERS.

Adams, John S.
Andrews, Henry
Adams, George W.
Adams, James J.
Alger, Israel
Anderson, Rufus
Adams, Charles J.
Augustus, John
Ayres, Charles
Andrews, J. R. G. jun.
Adams, William
Atwood, Ephraim
Andrews, Samuel G.

Battles, Jason D.
Batts, Timothy jun.
Brett, Cyrus
Brown, Charles A.
Baldwin, Luke jun.
Bridge, John
Bacon, Joseph G.
Burnham, Edward
Bennett, Benjamin
Bennett, John
Bedlington, Timothy
Briggs, William
Browsell, Gilbert
Brewster, Moses
Bradley, James
Baldwin, Henry
Bruce, Calvin
Barstow, George W.
Blasland, William
Blasland, Thomas jun.
Briggs, Richard S.
Bumstead, Frederick
Burdett, Nathan
Barton, Henry
Bird, Robert L.
Ball, G.
Barrett, Nathan
Barry, James jun.
Briggs, Cornelius
Brewer, George A.
Brewer, Samuel N.
Bailey, Simeon
Bassett, Cushman
Brown, Albert H.
Brewster, Ezra S.
Bingham, Amos Rev.
Bumstead, Jeremiah
Bumstead, Edmund

Benson, Henry J.
Benson, Alfred G.
Brewer, William A.
Bigelow, William H.
Baker, Eliphalet
Braynard, John D.

Campbell, Samuel
Carr, Joseph
Crosby, David
Clark, Noah
Clark, Isaac
Cobb, Nathaniel R.
Cudworth, Peter
Cook, John C.
Cragin, Lorenzo S.
Cobb, Elijah
Choate, John
Clapp, James
Clark, Calvin W.
Chase, Samuel
Callender, Edward
Coleman, E. B.
Chickering, Jonas
Child, Simeon
Clapp, Derastus
Cushing, E. D.
Clark, William
Crosby, Sumner
Chamberlain, Isaac
Cutler, Joseph E.
Cutler, William
Cobb, William H.
Carter, Harrington

Davis, Wm. Jones
Dix, J. G.
Dane, John
Dunbar, Samuel O.
Dana, John B.
Davis, John B.
Davis, Ebenezer
Dame, A. A.
Dodd, George
Dodd, Charles
Davidson, Edward
Dumont, John F. P.
Daniels, Josiah N.
Dyer, James
Daniels, Josiah
Dodge, John
Daniels, Nathaniel

Dix, Benjamin
Dearborn, George

Ellis, George
Eaton, William G.
Emmons, Nathaniel H.
Emmons, Stephen
Ellis, Samuel
Eayres, Joseph H.
Eayres, William
Emmons, Robert L.
Etheridge, John jun.
Ellison, Andrew jun.
Emmons, Henry jun.
Elliot, George A.

Fenno, John jun.
Fenno, Joseph
Farnsworth, Amos
Foster, John
Furber, John C.
Flint, G. P.
Flint, Joseph W.
Farrar, Daniel
Flint, Waldo
Farnham, Daniel
Furbush, Milo
French, Caleb
French, Jonathan jun.
Fox, Joseph
Fairbanks, Jonas M.
Freeman, Joseph L.
Fisher, Charles D.
Fuller, Sumner
Fullerton, John

Grant, Moses
Goodman, Horace H.
Glidden, Elisha
Gill, Caleb
Greenough, William H.
Gardner, William H.
Gerry, Elbridge
Gray, Jeremiah Lee
Gray, Wm. R.
Gulliver, John
Graupner, C. W. G.
Greenleaf, David
Gould, John
Guild, Charles
Gould, Benjamin A.

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Homes, Henry jun.
Homes, Henry A.
Homer, George F.
Homer, Charles W.
Hanners, Benjamin jun.
Hyde, Enoch jun.
Hogins, Asa B.
Hawes, Isaac M.
Hunting, Amos
Hadduck, William T.
Hubbard Wm. S.
Haskell, Amos H.
Hook, Gilman
Hopkins, Erastus
Hayward, Ebenezer W.
Hale, Moses L.
Hooper, John
Holbrook, Edward
Hayward, James T.
Hazleton, Richard
Haskins, John
Holbrook, John M.
Holbrook, Darius
Holbrook, Samuel R. M.
Homer, Jacob
Heard, William jun.
Hatch, Jabez
Hale, Thomas C.
Hale, Enoch
Holbrook, H. J.
Hardwick William
Hanscom, George
Haughton, Fred. W. A.
Homer, Walter W.
Hadley, Charles J.
Hood, Samuel
Henchman Daniel
Hichling, Charles
Holmes, Minot
Haskell, Jacob jun.
Howe, Samuel A.
Holbrook, Edmund S.
Hopkins, Lewis S.
Hitchcock, Samuel A.
Homer, Peter Thatcher

Jackson, Isaac R.
Johnson, Thomas
James, John W.
James, Joseph
Jerome, John J.
Jellison, Zechariah
Jones, Henry
Josselyn, M. J.
Josselyn, M. J. jun.
Jacobs, Benjamin jun.
Johnson, Nathan

Kahler, Jeremiah jun.
Kelley, Hall J.
King, Cyrus
King, Joseph
Kendall Isaac C.
Kittredge Alvah
Knapp, Henry
Kendall Luther

Lincoln, Levi R.
Lincoln, Levi
Lincoln, Justus
Lummus, Charles F.
Locke, Benjamin
Lewis, William
Lewis, Winslow jun.
Lewis, Frederick
Lewis, Gustavus
Langdon, Joseph
Learned, Samuel
Lewis, Luther
Lincoln, Ezra
Low, Josiah
Leavitt, William
Leeds, Joseph
Lathum, Marcus
Lamson, John A.
Lyon, Robert
Little, Wm. H.

Meston, Peter
Mitchell, Abraham
Morrill, Benjamin
Morse, Elijah
Merrill, Daniel
Maynard, Waldo
Maynard, Marcus
Moore, Mark
Messinger, Thos. H. H.
Morse, Hazen
Marshall, William
McClure, Alexander
McClure, Charles
Murray, Thomas A.

Nurse, Gilbert
Newell, Montgomery
Newcomb, Caleb
Nichols, William
Neville, Wm. H.

Osborne, David
Odiorne, James C.
Odiorne, Thomas G.
Oakman, Samuel
Palmer, Julius A.
Poor, John M.
Phipps, Samuel
Palmer, Simeon
Poor, Richard C.
Patten, James
Peters, Edward D.
Perkins, William
Paige, James W.
Phippen, Joshua
Parks, Thomas B.
Parks, A. C.
Parker, Richard G.
Prichard, William H.
Potter, William T.
Phillips, Thomas W.
Patten, Aaron H.
Prescott, Joseph N.
Penniman, Wm. M.
Proctor, Henry Martyn

Richards, Reuben
Russell, Edmund M.
Russell, Francis B.
Rogers, John Gray
Rogers, John W.
Rogers, Wm. E. P.
Rogers, George
Robinson, Jonas
Rhoades, Asa H.
Rhoades, Charles
Reaney, Wm. H.
Rhoades, Stephen

Stickney, William
Smith, George
Stimpson, Wm. C.
Stetson, Cushing
Stevens, Edward L.
Steel, Robert
Sewall, James C.
Sumner, Bradford
Simpkins, N. S.
Simpkins, John
Storrs, E. W.
Stimpson, Jonathan
Stimpson, Charles
Stevenson, Nathaniel H.
Stodder, R. H.
Stone, J. Emery
Stoddard, Lewis I.
Stanwood, Lemuel
Saville, John
Spring, John
Seaver, George

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Safford Daniel
Scudder, David
Salisbury, Samuel J.
Starr, A.
Stearns, Jonathan
Stone, Joshua
Smith, Joseph P.
Scudder, Charles
Smith, Alfred
Stevens, Henry
Shed, Joseph
Seaman, John B.
Shepard, Green
Spring, George
Stow, Edward

Todd, George
Train, Enoch
Tiffany, Loring
Tyler, Fisher Ames
Thatcher, David
Treadwell, John
Thayer, Joseph H.
Tufts, Gardner

Trumbull, Nathaniel
Trumbull, Nathaniel jun.
Train, Elijah N.
Tileston, William
Tileston, James H.
Thayer, George W.
Tuller, Charles
Tracy, Francis C.
Tappan, Samuel S.
Tufts, Edmund

Vila, Joseph
Vinton, George
Vose, Reuben
Vose, Isaac jun.
Van Dorn, Frederic

Winslow, Elisha
Wayland, Francis Rev.
Withington, J. Sumner
Williams, Francis H.
Washburn, W. R. T.
Williams, R. P.
Withington, Otis

Webster, Eliphalet H.
Waterman, Charles L. P.
Wheelwright, John T.
Wheelwright, Lot jun.
Wheelwright, Wm. W.
Wheelwright, Josiah
Ward, John G.
Watts, Edward
Whiting, Wm. J.
Willis, Nathaniel P.
Whitmarsh, Samuel
Wenzell, Henry
Williams, Willard
Williams, Isaac
Whiting, Marcus
White, Edward
White, Charles
White, William B.
White, Henry
Wetmore, Thomas
Walker Robert G.
Wisner, Barnet N.
Woods, G. H.
Woods, Richard T.

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7.

The Mutability of Created Things a Reason for Active Benevolence.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE HOWARD BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

OF BOSTON, JANUARY 12TH, 1820.

BY

RICHARD S. STORRS, *A. M.*

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN BRAINTREE.

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SERMON.

ECCLES. i. 7.

"All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the rivers come, thither they return again."

THE natural world is a volume from which the inspired writers have drawn very copious proofs and illustrations of principles which they have advanced. It is a treasury from which all generations of men have drawn large supplies of moral and intellectual wealth. It is a mirror which clearly reflects the glory of the Creator.

When Solomon would show that every thing belonging to man is subject to change, he appeals to the mutability of objects with which men are most familiar. "The Sun ariseth, and the Sun goeth down;" "the wind goeth toward the South, and turneth about unto the North, it whirleth about continually." "The rivers run into the sea—unto the place whence the rivers come, they return again." These facts, which need no proof, are brought forward simply for the purpose of confirming a truth which

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man is loath to admit, and which yet lies at the foundation of all that is wise and good in human conduct. Prudence will always act on established principles : let it be established therefore that immutability is no attribute of created things, and that the Providence of God determines the success or defeat of every enterprize, prudence will dictate to every man some higher end of exertion than his own gratification, and point out to him the proper and specific end, together with the infallible means of securing it.

There is an Immutable Being. From Him proceeds an immutable law, which however varied in its aspects, or multiplied in its precepts and sanctions, is settled on one simple principle—LOVE.

When mutability is stamped therefore, on all earthly things, we may regard the fact as an expression of Divine Benevolence—as the legitimate operation of that great law of Love, which connects holiness with happiness, and so disposes of all inferior creatures, as to lead the mind of man upward, and induce him to seek his pleasures where Infinite Wisdom hath treasured them.

We presume it will not be denied, that the tendencies of human nature are strongly bent toward earthly objects ; that if those objects were more substantial, and permanent in their duration, it would scarcely be possible to divert the mind from them, or to fasten the affections by any tie, on the invisible realities of a future world. Yet such a diversion of the mind would be necessary to that happiness for which immortal powers are fitted, even were present objects far less mutable than they are : for no acquisition of earthly good, however vast or varied, can wholly occu-

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py those powers. Whatever, therefore, in the government of God counteracts the tendencies of our nature toward improper dependence on creatures, ought to be regarded as the result of Infinite Benevolence.

I. What is the nature of this mutability? II. What instructions does it furnish us?

I. What is the nature of this mutability?

It is not to be confounded with chance. In strict truth nothing can be called accidental, though in common language there may be no impropriety in speaking of an unlooked for event in such style. It is not chance, which divests us at one period of life of those graces or powers which we possess at another. It is not chance, which bestows an abundant fortune, or takes it away. It is not chance, which throws us on the bed of sickness, or restores us to health. Events like these, however unexpected, are in no case to be accounted for on the hypothesis of an Accidental Cause.

It involves not the idea of confusion in the plan of God. Though much apparent disorder meets the eye of man, yet in truth, the most perfect unity of design, and concert of operation, are every where preserved. All things, whether prosperous or adverse, joyful or afflictive, are conspiring to one and the same grand result. They are so many links in that extended chain of events, by which Infinite Wisdom will in the end fully develope its resources. Light shall shine out of darkness—order shall proceed from confusion, and from evil, good shall be educed.

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All things are under the government of fixed laws. Perhaps we should be more correctly understood, if we should say that the Providence of God regulates all things agreeably to certain uniform principles. What those principles are, we are able to learn from their operation. In many instances, we can discern the connection between effects and their immediate causes; or, from observing any effect uniformly to follow any cause, we form a notion of mutual dependence between such effect and cause. But in innumerable instances, we are unable to discover such a connection, and are obliged to resolve the effects we see, into the Sovereign will of Jehovah. Now whether we perceive the connection or not, a connection subsists—not independently between an effect and its immediate cause, but between every effect and the will of God.

It is the will of God, that the spendthrift should come to poverty, that the man of sobriety, industry and prudence, should rise to wealth. It is the will of God, that the vicious should suffer a long train of ills from which the virtuous are exempted. It is the will of God that the profligate man of wealth should rear up a family for infamy, and that the seed of the righteous should not be seen begging bread. We may observe, or imagine as many secondary causes as we will—but the good pleasure of God is the First Cause. He has established those principles which in their operation lead inevitably to such results.

The mutability of all human affairs then, is to be traced to the counsels of Infinite Intelligence. The sparrow falls not to the ground, without his direction. The mote wafted on the breeze, wanders not from the path he prescribes. Let sickness and death, penury and distress go where

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they will ; let them assail the feeble or the strong, the prince or the peasant, the gay or the gloomy, they are but his messengers—they execute his purposes.

II. What instructions does this mutability of all earthly things furnish us ?

1. That whatever we possess comes from God. If there be no immutable laws independent of the will of God, and laws with which we are well enough acquainted, to make them the rule of our conduct, then it is evident that no acquisitions we may make, are either the result of immutable laws, or of our obedience to them. Whatever success in enterprize we may ascribe to *fortune*, is justly ascribed only to God. Whatever felicity of plan we may ascribe to our own superior wisdom, is justly ascribed only to God ; and when beyond our expectations, or even contrary to them, we are loaded with benefits, they flow only from the hand of God. " *He* giveth us richly all things to enjoy." " *He* opens his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." " *He* preserveth the strangers, and relieveth the fatherless and widow." " He openeth the eyes of the blind—raiseth them that be bowed down—executeth judgment for the oppressed, and giveth food to the hungry ;" wherefore, " put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom is no help." " The Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

What is there splendid in riches—what is there delightful in applause—what is there elevating in knowledge—what is there precious in friendship—what is there tender in the heart of charity ?—it is the gift of God, these are the bounties of his wise and gracious Providence. " I re-

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turned and saw under the Sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise nor riches to men of understanding, but time and chance happeneth to all ;" i. e. these events are regulated on no other known principle, than that such is the will of God.

Who art thou, O man! basking in the sunshine of prosperity, while thy poor brother bends under the pressure of affliction ? thy head is erect, while his is bowed like the bulrush ; thine eyes sparkle with pleasure, while his are suffused with tears, thy heart expands with joy, while his bursts with grief ; brilliant prospects animate your every movement, overhanging darkness causes him to shrink from effort, and hide him from the world. " Who hath made thee to differ ?" It is God, that blesses thee—"What hast thou, that thou hast not received."

2. Whatever God hath given us ought to be used agreeably to the design for which it was bestowed. The gifts of God are so many talents committed to us for improvement, and whether they be ten, five, or one, he will call us to an account for our stewardship. Our obligations in this case are not founded on any voluntary mutual contract between him and us. They result from subsisting and indissoluble relations. Our own will has no concern with them. If the relation of parent and child necessarily involves authority on one side, and obedience on the other ; if the relation of Ruler, necessarily involves the right to command, and the relation of subject the duty of submission ; then the relations between God and man, as Creator and creature, as Father and children, as King and subjects, necessarily involves the right of unlimited control

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or the duty of unreserved submission on the other. These relations will not be denied to exist, and, of course, our obligations to improve whatever we possess, agreeably to the will of God, ought to be admitted.

But does not every sentiment of gratitude likewise, require us to govern ourselves according to the pleasure of our Supreme Benefactor? Who of us should not reprobate the conduct of a beneficiary enriched by our bounty and directed by our superior wisdom how to improve our benefaction, if he should immediately devote it to the gratification of some brutal lust? Nothing is plainer than that his conduct proceeds from a destitution of principle, warranting us to withhold from him entirely, or requiring us to bestow with new restrictions in future. Let it be remembered then, that Gratitude requires a holy improvement of all we enjoy.

3. It is the will of God, that the bounties of his Providence, should be devoted by those who enjoy them; to the relief of the destitute. This relief is by no means to be restricted to their temporal necessities, for these, when most extreme, are of trivial importance compared with their deliverance from the bondage of sin, and from the fearful curse of a violated law.

But even to gain access to the heart of the obstinate transgressor—to draw from his eye the tear of penitence—to lift his hands to Heaven in prayer, and dispose him to "lay hold on the hope set before him," it is necessary to shew him that you have a heart which can participate his woes, or sympathize in his unalleviated sorrows, or extend the bounty that he needs for immediate relief. Show

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him that you have a brother's heart—convince him that the tender mercies of Religion are *not* cruelty, then—you may point him to the bleeding Saviour, to the incorruptible inheritance—and he will look—he will listen—he *may* believe, and be saved.

But what saith the Lord ? "A good man showeth favor and lendeth ; he hath dispersed and given to the poor ; his righteousness endureth forever." "Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thy hand to do it. Say not unto thy neighbour, Go and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee." And has not God said, "deal thy bread to the hungry ; bring the poor that are cast out, to thine house ; when thou seest the naked, cover him ; hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?" "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away." "If ye do good to them which do good to you, or lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thanks have ye—for sinners do also even the same." Timothy is commanded to charge them that are rich in this world, that they do good—that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. James in defining "pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father," declares it is this ;—"to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." You are aware, that these are but a few of testimonies of the Holy Spirit, to the will of God on this subject. There is no point of practical piety more clearly established, more variously exhibited, more fully explained in the Sacred Volume ; and we are never more surprized by any aberrations of the human understanding, than those we often discover in relation to this very point.

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It would seem as though the way-faring man, if he were a fool, could never err here—if he stumble and fall over some things hard to be understood in the writings of a single Apostle, he has yet no excuse for stumbling *here*. Duty is plain. The will of God is explicit. And when men clench their hands and steel their bosoms against the cries of the poor, we are obliged to have recourse for reasons of the fact, to the covetousness of their hearts—a covetousness that ensnared Balaam, destroyed Ahab, and has overthrown thousands of every generation. "It is a bed, shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it, and a covering, narrower than that he can wrap himself in."

We have sometimes seen the mere doctrinal believer, penurious and hard-hearted, we have seen him—like the ice of the polar regions, maintaining the unabated rigors of his nature under the softest influences—like the prowling native of the forest, inaccessible to the pleadings of reason and of tears. O "tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ascalon—lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph!" Religion never yet scathed the soul, and bound every tender sympathy in "adamantine chains;" her origin is from Heaven, and like Him who dwelleth in the bosom of Eternal LOVE, she "goeth about doing good;" her rule of action, is that which guides the Angel's way, when flying on errands of mercy to suffering humanity; that, which rescues hesitating Lot from the flames of Sodom, and oppressed Israel from Egypt's iron yoke. She hears—and she obeys the high command of God, "what ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them;" "feed the hungry,—clothe the naked—visit the sick"—"*they* cannot recompense you, but you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

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Now how much soever we admire the materials that compose the system of Christianity, how ardently soever we love those doctrines of grace that lie at its foundation, and those unostentatious virtues that form its strong pillars; we wish also to discover fair proportions, and to see the whole edifice ornamented with "works of faith, and labours of love." Nor can it be admitted for a moment, that faith without works is a living faith, any more than it can be admitted, that works may supersede the righteousness of Christ in man's salvation. Faith has its appropriate situation in every temple of the Lord's building; works too, have theirs; and among these works, none are more distinguished than the wise distribution of our goods among the poor.

4. These appropriations are not the business of a short hour, but of life. "All the rivers run into the sea, yet is not the sea full"—they are constantly flowing, but make no sensible addition to the waters of the Great Deep. So, space for the exercise of charity will always remain. "The poor ye have always with you." One generation may be swept away, but another cometh. The objects of your beneficence twenty years ago, may now be all sleeping in the dust of the earth; yet others in quick succession have followed—and have not these last, equal claims with the first? The wants of the poor and the miserable are like the drops of the ocean for multitude, and ever will be, till sin ceases its mad control, and "every man sitteth under his *own* vine and fig-tree." Let the streams of your bounty flow ever so freely, this ocean will not be full; pour into it the most ample contributions—there is room for more.

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"Ah! that's my judgment too," says the close-fisted worldling, "I have always found that the more I *did* give, the more I *might* give, and I am determined to put an end to these exactions on my benevolence." My hearers, your presence assures me that such is not *your* language, and that such will not be your course of conduct. Where, I ask, where would be the pleasure of *living* in this ungodly world, if one were denied the sweet consciousness of contributing to the happiness of the wretched? The cup of our bliss would be drained of its last drop, if in the present state of things, we had not the privilege of supplying the wants of the destitute and relieving the aching heart. Is it not a luxury to hush the sobs of a poor orphan who is returning from his father's grave to a desolated tenement, by saying to him—"My son! *I* will be a father to you!" Is it not luxury to assuage the overpowering, or half-stifled griefs of that poor woman, whose husband's arm is torn from under her, by saying—"trust in God—look to me—you shall never want!" Who that is blest with opulence, will not estimate its value, according to the ability it furnishes him of doing good? For what can any one who is worthy the name of MAN be more grateful to Heaven, than for the privilege of being a Benefactor to his suffering fellow-creatures? Take away this privilege—life becomes a burden—wealth an idle pageant—honor an empty puff.

No! Man was made for deeds of benevolence. When he scorns those deeds, he debases the dignity of his nature; he abandons the high station assigned him by Deity; he surrenders himself to the dominion of a passion, too ignoble for brutes to indulge. It is that he may retrieve his fallen character, and show himself the disciple of Jesus,

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that he is planted in these wide wastes of natural disorder and spiritual death. The All-wise God permits evils to abound, for the purpose of affording to those who would lay hold on eternal life, an opportunity to show their faith, their love, their zeal, in the cause for which Jesus bled; and thereby to gain evidence of their Union to Him, and meetness for Heaven.

Say not then, that the scope for charity is too large, or its demands too imperious. God requires you to do no more than you are able—he requires you to do *all* that, constantly. By obedience, you assimilate yourselves to Him—you become fellow labourers with angels and the Lord of angels. "Be not weary in well doing."

5. Those who prudently and cheerfully distribute their goods to feed the poor, will find their liberality returned into their own bosoms. It is the decree of Heaven, that while all created things are mutable, "the rivers shall return again whence they came." The benefactor of the poor shall not be impoverished, the friend of the friendless shall never want friends in time of need.

What if I cannot answer the question of hard-featured Avarice—"*how* can this thing be?" Shall I doubt the fact? Must I deny what I may be unable to comprehend —or reject whatever I cannot explain?—far from it.

The *fact* is supported by analogy. If trees decay, they spring up again. If the sea ebb, it does not forget to flow. If the Sun goeth down, still it riseth. If man dieth, yet he shall live again. And what in the nature of things forbids, or rather what does not justify the expectation,

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that the liberal man shall receive again, what he may have wisely dispersed ?

The fact is supported by *reason*. God is good. He loves those who bear the image of his goodness. Those whom he loves, he will bless ; therefore he will bless those who do good, like Him. God requires us to be compassionate and kind ; his commands imply a promise of favor to the obedient ; whoever is obedient, therefore, will be rewarded. Beside, kindness always begets kindness ; the reputation of disinterested generosity creates friends ; a man's friends are his shield ; they will either interpose themselves between him and disaster, or fly to his succour when he has fallen. On the contrary, the selfish man has none but *bribed* friends, and when Gold, his god, forsakes him, they forsake him too. His hand is commonly against every man, and every man's hand against him. An object of *affection* he cannot be, though he may be an object of dread ; for while he grinds the faces of the poor, and shuts his ears against the voice of distress, he more resembles the King of terrors, than the Lord of Heaven. But the good man—the man of liberal feeling and charitable deed, meets a welcome wherever he goes, and enjoys that universal confidence, which cannot fail to sustain him in circumstances of trial, and advance his interest when the interposition of kind offices is required.

The fact is supported by *experience*. Point me out the man that ever felt the poorer for the abundance of his charities. Point me to the man who has tasted the pleasures of giving freely to the Lord, and to the poor, that is willing to be debarred those pleasures. I need not say, that thousands are now living, who will testify that the

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foundation of their prosperity was laid in the beneficence of their Parents, humbly imitated by themselves, and that they find the highest delights of life in their munificence to religious and charitable institutions. There are thousands living, who will declare with one voice, that poverty itself has no terrors compared with covetousness, and that a little which the generous man hath, is better than great riches, with a selfish spirit.

Even a heathen could say, when standing on the wreck of his fortunes, "I have nothing left, except what I have given away." The brave, but voluptuous Roman, while *uninstructed* in the principles of Christianity, felt a glow of animation amid surrounding ruins which nothing could have inspired, save an experimental conviction, that generosity and kindness shall never lose their reward. Might I adduce as a witness, the distinguished philanthropist whose spirit is the pillar, and whose name is the ornament of the Society for which I plead—would not every deed of his life, every moment of patient toil, every adventurous enterprize, in which he embarked, every eulogium that honours his memory, sustain the point, and shew the rewards of charity? Give me the sterling wealth of Howard, and he that will may take the wealth of Crœsus. Give me the empire of Howard over the *miseries* of man, and he that will may take the empire of Cæsar. Give me the pre-eminent honours of Howard, and he that will may glitter in the pageantry of crowns, and twine around him all the insignia of worldly grandeur.

The fact is sustained by the testimony of God. "He that hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and *that which he hath given him will he pay him again.*" "If there

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be among you a poor man, thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, because that for this thing, *the Lord thy God shalt bless thee in all thy works ; and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.*" "Give, and it shall be given unto you—with the same measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again." But I need not multiply these testimonies, because they are already familiar to you, and one promise of God is as valid as thousands.

If after all this, you inquire again, "*how* can these things be"? I answer, tell me how the rivers return to the place from whence they come—how are summer and winter, seed time and harvest, produced—tell me how the grass of the field groweth, or tell me the path of the pestilence, and the course of the arrow that flieth at noon day. Are not all things possible with God? Is not nature in all her dominions obedient to him? Does not the lightning strike, when and where it pleases him? Does he not cause the winds to blow, or to be still—the sun to shine or to cover himself with the dark cloud? Does he not open or stop the bottles of heaven at his pleasure—lay waste or build up a city—plant or depopulate a kingdom? Why then, may he not execute his word, and enrich the benefactors of the poor when he pleases? Why may he not thwart every purpose of selfishness, and crown the labours of the generous spirit with success? Truth, he will not violate; therefore his promises cannot fail.

But says the objector, "I do not SEE these promises fulfilled." No—nor does the blind man distinguish colours. Do you therefore doubt the existence of colours? Open your eyes—you shall see wealth flowing into the cof-

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fers of the man who has no higher object than to enrich himself by his charities—applause descending on the head of one who seeks only the praise of men—self-complacency swelling the bosom of one who gives only from the impulse of natural tenderness ;—and, look with the eye of faith into Eternity—you shall see a throne erected—a crown prepared for *him*, who disdaining all inferior motives, gives to the poor, because the LORD commands. All charity does not find its reward *here*, because it does not desire it here—it looks beyond the grave, it fastens on the rewards of communion with God, and fellowship with his Son. The treasures it accumulates are laid up in Heaven ; there, the pious Benefactor holds his way, and there, he shall find exhaustless riches—joys everlasting.

It is the motive that qualifies the action, and determines the nature of the reward. Eternal Truth stands pledged, that the man who performs a generous deed shall be recompensed ; let every man ask his own heart what recompense he wishes ;—is it Gold ? he shall have it ; is it Fame ? he shall have it ; is it the prayers of the pious, the glories of Heaven ? he shall have them.

But the votary of dissipation will say to you after all—"Allow me to devote my money and my time to my pleasures, and you shall be welcome to the gains of your charities"—'Tis done—the bargain is struck—the recording angel has penned it down in the book of remembrance !

Now follow that *man of pleasure* through all the windings of his heart's desire ; follow him to the banquet, where satiety mocks his efforts after happiness—to the flowing bowl, whose fumes distemper his imagination—to

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the stalls of game where chance dissipates his golden dreams—to his home where disorder every where meets him—to prison, where the wife of his bosom is a stranger —to a sickbed, where no angel of mercy stands to soothe his agitated bosom—to the grave, where not a ray of hope enters—to the judgment-seat, where no advocate appears —where law condemns—where justice executes—where misery without end overtakes him.

Is this a picture of imagination? Let the Judge himself answer; "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not"—"these shall go away into everlasting punishment."

But many as have been the groans of a dying bed, in consequence of defrauding the poor and the helpless; many as have been the agonizing confessions extorted by the power of Conscience, in the retrospect of a life supremely devoted to gain; and many as have been the imprecations, drawn forth by the prospective solemnities of judgment; —never, no never in that solemn hour, did the departing spirit look back, and mourn its beneficence to the needy, its sympathies with the distressed, its sacrifices in behalf of the miserable. Then, the world assumes its proper shape and value; then, delusion's sway over the understanding is broken—the enchantments of business and pleasure let go their hold on the heart, and the soul urging its way to the presence of Jehovah, rises superior to every fear, in the sweet recollection of a life devoted to labours of love, and the immortal felicity of man.

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Permit me to address myself for a moment, to the Benevolent Society, at whose request I now plead the cause of God, and suffering humanity.

At this day of heroic enterprize in the cause of benevolence, and in this region, where the principles of our Holy Religion have taken so deep root, I do not wonder at the establishment of an Institution like yours. In a town like this, distinguished by enlightened and liberal benefactors, to every object of intrinsic excellence, it would indeed be surprizing not to find Associations formed, for the alleviation of local miseries, and the promotion of local prosperity.

Your Object is noble—more—it is Christian! You are employed in searching out and relieving the sick, whose meekness forbids them to complain, and whose indigence requires your aid; in encouraging habits of industry among the poor; removing temptations to vice; providing means for their useful employment; and preparing them for respectability in society. You are also engaged to watch by their sickbeds, to raise their drooping spirits, to minister cordials to their decaying bodies, and tender to them the consolations of the gospel. To *state* your object, is enough to command the best wishes for your success, and the most cordial co-operation of all who love to indulge the sweetest sensibilities of our nature.

You are not satisfied, when you have relieved their temporal wants. You wish to convey to them the soul healing waters of the Heavenly Siloa, and to break to them that bread which endureth to eternal life. You would lay them at Jesus' feet, that he might heal them, and that an-

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gels might conduct their departing spirits to Abraham's bosom. These designs cannot be too much applauded, nor the tendency of the means you employ, doubted.

Yes! show to the poor—show to the world what Christianity *is*; not a cold system of speculative notions——not a dry collection of hard sayings—not a trunk without hands or feet—not a head without a heart—not a body without a soul—No! Show them that it is tenderness nerved with strength—compassion armed with courage—calculation inspired to action—and perseverance, to be vanquished by no difficulties. Show them that it is not Pride, looking contemptuously on the lowly cottage; but Pity, tendering heaven's best blessings to the abject. Show them that it is not the hard-heartedness of the Priest or the Levite, passing by on the other side, but the sympathy and generosity of the Good Samaritan, binding up wounds, and pouring in the oil of joy.

Your kindness may sometimes be repaid with ingratitude; vice may break through all the tender restraints you have prepared for it—but, you will never be discouraged. If by all your labours, you can convert one sinner from the error of his way, you will hide a multitude of sins—but, you shall convert many. If you can find among all your beneficiaries one grateful heart, you may be satisfied—but, you shall find many. Never say, "these ungrateful objects of our bounty deserve no pity"; What do any of us deserve at the hand of God? Yet he bestows his bounties "on the wild and unthankful;" what pity deserved the Jews who crucified the Lord of life and glory? yet, Jesus prayed, "Father! forgive them," and

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poured out his blood for them. It may be more congenial to our feelings to give to the virtuous and thankful—but, it is less Godlike, than to "overcome evil with good."

May the blessing of Jehovah rest upon you. Confide in his promises. "Cast thy bread on the waters, and thou shalt find it after many days." "There is, that scattereth, and yet increaseth." May your numbers and strength be increased. May new resources for the accomplishment of your benevolent enterprise be opened, and may "the blessing of many ready to perish come upon you."

A word to this assembly. Might I be permitted, I would for a moment, take you by the hand, and conduct you—not to the mansion of elegance and ease—not to the splendid apartments of wealth and pleasure—not within the sound of music's instruments, touched by the hand of Beauty—not to "the feast of reason, and the flow of soul;"—but, to the dim-lighted cabin; to the bedside of sickening poverty; to the gloomy hearth, where the desponding wife prepares the scanty refreshment for her dying husband, while the cries of her half famished helpless children augment her anguish. Or, I would beg you to look on the accumulated sufferings of a family, disposed to industry, but bending under the weight of Heaven's rod; hunger, cold, nakedness, sickness, imprisonment and death are crouding thick around them—they are bone of your bone—flesh of your flesh—there is your Brother—there is your Sis-

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ter——Can you turn your back on them and say—"I have nothing to bestow"?

But this is no fiction. Reality is here. Turn to the records of the Society for which I ask your aid to-night, and you shall find the pen of History writing tales of woe, of which the picture I give you, is but a feeble transcript. These friends of human happiness, have penetrated the recesses of poverty—they have plunged into the bosom of distress, and marked its writhings—they have employed themselves in taking the guage of wretchedness around them, and are extending their arms to help;—they are visiting Christ in prison—feeding and clothing his destitute members, and looking for their reward to that day, when he shall say to them, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these, ye have done it unto me." Will you not then, gladly make them the Almoners of your bounty—become their helpers in this divine labour, and partakers with them of the Glory that shall follow?

Where is even the coolest calculator that will pronounce this an Utopian scheme? It is charity that begins at home—and blessed be God! it does not end there. It is a charity that relieves the anguish of your nearest neighbour—it wipes away the orphan's tear—it suppresses the wailing of the widow, and raises the head of the despairing husband—father!

Am I mistaken in my confidence, that only one sentiment pervades this assembly?—that you can all weep with them that weep—that you esteem it the sweetest luxury to make the disconsolate heart leap for joy—to

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save a life that otherwise must waste in infamy, and go out in darkness?

You will not then, to-night "sow sparingly," nor deny yourselves the luxury you prize above silver and gold. You will not refuse to light the lamp of hope in the dark dwellings of poverty, to pour the oil of joy into the wounded heart, and guide the wandering eye of the penitent to the "Star of Bethlehem."

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8

Signs of the Times.

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL

OF THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

ANDOVER,

ON

THE PUBLIC FAST,

APRIL 3, 1823.

BY EBENEZER PORTER, D. D.

BARTLET PROFESSOR OF SACRED RHETORIC IN THE SEMINARY.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The reader will bear in mind that a large proportion of the audience to whom this sermon was delivered, consists of students who are preparing for the ministry. As these are expected soon to exert an important influence in promoting the benevolent operations of the day, it seemed desirable to impress on their minds some general principles of caution, adapted to the times. At their request, the views especially designed for them are given to the public. Some of these views, the author is aware, from the intrinsic difficulty of the subject, may be liable to misapprehension; but his hope is that many of the thoughts suggested will be found seasonable and useful.

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SERMON.

MATTHEW XVI. 3.

O YE HYPOCRITES, YE CAN DISCERN THE FACE OF THE SKY; BUT CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES?

THE Pharisees and Sadducees, alarmed at the progress which the gospel was making, came to Christ, "and tempting him, desired that he would show them a sign from heaven," proving himself to be the Messiah. To this demand he answered, "When it is evening, ye say it will be fair weather; for the sky is red. And in the morning, it will be foul weather to-day; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

This pointed reproof from the Saviour amounts to a declaration that the evidences of his Messiahship were already too abundant to be questioned by men of common capacity and integrity. The descent of the Holy Ghost upon him, and the voice which declared him to be the Son of God, at his baptism, were signs from heaven. His doctrines, his miracles,

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and the many prophecies that had their unquestionable fulfilment in him, were signs from heaven, furnishing most ample testimony to his divine character. To overlook all these proofs, and to demand others, denoted a criminal unbelief, deserving the censure which it received.

It was to be expected that the coming of the Saviour would be designated, in the language of prophecy, and in the arrangements of providence, with marks of higher distinction than any other event in the history of our world. Next to this in importance, is the period when the gospel is to be preached to all people, and the knowledge of the Lord is to fill the earth. The most judicious expositors of the prophecies have expected this period to be ushered in by circumstances of a conspicuous character. So far as the aspects of the present time accord with these prophetic intimations, they attach a special importance to our privileges and obligations as Christians.

I am not about to enter into a minute inquiry how far the characteristics of this day are marked out by ancient prophecy. No advantage to the church has resulted from the taste for visionary and sanguine speculation, often indulged on this subject. Writers of this stamp have a thousand times applied the sublime predictions of the scriptures to events however transient or trivial, which happened to interest themselves. But there is a sober view of the

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prophecies, which leads us to look for a mighty change in the moral condition of the world; a change resulting from the universal prevalence of true religion. When this day of triumph to the church will come, and how long it will last, are points on which various opinions have been entertained by the ablest men. But the certainty that it will come, furnishes one of the most delightful, and one of the most general subjects of faith and prayer to Christians. The signs of the times, indeed, seem to indicate that we stand upon the confines of this day. The serious observer of events for the last twenty years, must have been impressed with a strong persuasion that a great moral revolution is approaching.

For a long period the energies and resources of Christendom were exhausted in war. The worst passions of men were let loose from restraint; the nations dashed one against another; and the tempest, fraught with havoc and destruction, swept over the fairest portions of the globe. But he who "rides in the whirlwind," intended that this conflict of the elements should produce a purer atmosphere, and a serener sky.

Among the signs by which the present period is marked may be mentioned, an unusual spirit of prayer; revivals of religion, uncommonly powerful and extensive; the increase of candour and fraternal feeling among different denominations of Christians; un-

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usual efforts to spread the Bible; unusual efforts to evangelize the heathen; unusual efforts to give religious instruction to the rising generation; unusual efforts to increase the number of pious and able ministers.

These grand movements in the kingdom of grace, are rapidly acquiring an ascendency over the minds of men. In one form or another, they are becoming the general subject of interest, and of conversation. Christians are roused. The long slumber of the church is succeeded by a zeal that "*attempts great things, expects great things;*" a zeal, which kindles to a brighter flame as it burns, and rises, amidst discouragements, to higher hopes, and bolder achievements. The majestic river, that swells with the accession of tributary streams, rolls onward, bearing away every thing that falls in with its current. So the great objects of Christian benevolence, at this day, seem destined to swallow up the thousand minor objects of regard, to harmonize the views of hostile sects, and to combine by a common impulse, the efforts of princes, statesmen, and peasants, to promote the interests of the church.

It would give me pleasure to pursue this train of reflection, and to present in a distinct review those signs of the times, which are adapted to encourage the faith and hope of Christians. It can hardly be necessary, however, to repeat what has been already

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so often and ably done, from the pulpit and the press. But as connected with the circumstances of prosperity to which I have alluded, and as growing out of them, there are other characteristics of the present day, which seem to have attracted less notice than they deserve. The history of a few past years furnishes lessons of instruction and caution, as well as of animation. The sober observer of events must perceive that there are dangers to be guarded against, in our great systems of benevolent operation; and it is to these signs of the times, that I purpose especially to call your attention in this discourse.

Let me not be understood, however, in any remarks which follow, to express an apprehension, that we are in danger of indulging excessive zeal for the cause of religion. When I recollect that after a lapse of eighteen hundred years since the Saviour died to redeem lost men, three fourths of our race have not so much as heard of his name; when I see the nations of modern Christendom lavish more expense on one military campaign, than they bestow on the church in a century; when I hear Christians acknowledge that all the luxuries of the world ought promptly to be sacrificed, if that were the price of bringing a single heathen to embrace the truth; and when I lay by the side of this acknowledgment another fact, that very few Christians are to be found, who have come to regard it as their serious duty to retrench any per-

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sonal comfort or even embellishment for the sake of sending the gospel to hundreds of millions, who are ignorant of its blessings; I can see no reason to think that immoderate zeal in behalf of religion is now, or is likely to be hereafter, a fault of the church. On the contrary, the work of converting the world cannot be consummated without calling into action zeal a hundred times more fervent than we have hitherto witnessed. If I could suppose that any sentence of this discourse would tend to damp the ardor, or paralyse the efforts of a single pious soul, I would blot it out forever. But surely it is not a blind zeal that is to carry forward the great enterprises of this age. It is a zeal guided by wisdom, and one that can perceive the dangers attendant on its own operations.

Let us proceed then to consider these dangers, as *they respect men without personal religion; and as they respect real Christians, and the interests of the church.*

I. As they respect men who are destitute of personal religion.

Any tendency which there may be in the system of things at this day, to sink the grand requisitions of the gospel out of sight, and to cherish in men the hope of acceptance with God, while destitute of the temper which he requires, must seriously endanger their eternal interests.

If I mistake not, there is such a tendency. The church and the world are becoming accustomed to

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meet on the same common ground, and to act in concert respecting the general interests of religion, without keeping distinctly in view those *principles*, which stamp the character of actions in the sight of heaven. To be more specific. The simple act of giving money to a religious object may be regarded as a truly religious act, while the motive may be such as God cannot approve, and as the giver himself would be unwilling to avow before his fellow men. I am aware that the prerogative of searching hearts is not committed to us. I am aware too that for certain purposes, and to a certain extent, the motives of actions, apparently good, are of little importance. The beggar's hunger may be as effectually relieved by bread given from ostentation, as from Christian benevolence. If I contribute to send the preaching of the gospel to a heathen, the value of the benefit to him depends not at all on the temper in me, which prompted the contribution. A Bible, given by an infidel, is as precious in its contents, and may be as useful as though given by an apostle. But in respect to the spiritual state of the *giver*, the motive is of infinite importance; because on this absolutely, and this only, the moral worth of the action depends. And shall we undervalue and dishonor the Bible at home, in the very act of sending it abroad? Shall the man by whose liberality we are enabled to bestow this treasure on others, be tempted to forget the claims which this holy book

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asserts over his own heart, and the terms upon which it offers him salvation?

In our efforts to spread the light of the Gospel in remote countries, we must take care not to extinguish nor obscure its light in our own. Now this danger consists in a want of practical discrimination as to the *motive* of our actions. It results from a kind of implied and indefinite understanding, that whatever has the appearance of respect for religion, *is* religion. And the course of things in regard to our public charities, I fear is too much adapted to cherish this mistake.

Worldly men may aid these charities from the impulse of conscience, from social sympathies, or from regard to personal reputation. He who hates the truth, may promote benevolent institutions, to appease that disquietude which the absolute neglect of all religion must produce in his own bosom; or to exhibit his generosity to a public object, or his compassion to those whose condition and privileges are far inferior to his own. Yet the most equivocal expressions of respect for Christianity, in a man or woman of elevated station, is easily construed into demonstration of personal religion. The Prince is a patron of the Bible Society; his name is blazoned in capitals on its subscription list; his presence at its anniversary is hailed with acclamations; his speech in favour of the Bible is interrupted with bursts of applause, is echoed

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through the country in every hamlet, and is the theme of eulogy in every Gazette. But who *is* this friend of the Bible? A man perhaps who suffers it to stand as an ornament to his library, in all the elegance which art can give to its exterior; while he loves not its doctrines, and fears not its threatenings, and has scarcely read a page of it in his life. A man whose morals not only are in fact, but are commonly known to be at open variance with the spirit and requisitions of this holy book.

Now, while such gross perversion of sentiment is wrought into systems of public charity, and receives the sanction of Christians and ministers, what must be its influence on the multitude of thoughtless men, who wish to embrace any views of the gospel, rather than those which alarm and humble them as sinners? What must be its influence on the man himself, whose fatal ignorance of his own spiritual state is thus strengthened by the undistinguishing testimonies of respect which he receives from Christians, while he secretly rejects and perhaps reviles Christianity itself. O, with what dismay must he hear from the mouth of his enthroned Judge; "These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will reprove thee."

Do I mean to say then, that it were better if worldly great men were open opposers of Christian

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institutions? No:—but it were better if they were real and consistent Christians. Nor do I mean that all such men, who promote these institutions, are included in the description which the poet gives of one,

——"who for the bane of thousands born,
Built God a church, and laugh'd his word to scorn."

Our age furnishes examples of illustrious rank united with eminent piety. And where it is otherwise, there is often an inherent antidote to its own mischief, connected with a profligate character.

But in respect to the numerous class of decent, sober, respectable men, who yet "love not our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity," there is much danger that they will substitute an approbation of Bible societies, and other evangelical charities, for vital religion.

It has been so common for men to indulge an immoderate, selfish love of money, that the use of it for any benevolent purpose, is, in itself, laudable, and draws after it the approbation of every ingenuous mind. The danger of deception here, lies in the fact that the motive, which prompts the charity, is supposed to correspond in nature with the object to be promoted. If this were a road, a canal, or a commercial enterprise, mistake would hardly be possible. But it is *religion* that is aided, and this, whatever be the state of the heart, is presumed to sanctify the motive of the agent.

The child claims no merit for buying his baubles;

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while he gives his little contributions to missions, perhaps with the heart of a little Pharisee. Shall he be discouraged then from his charities? God forbid. Let him be stimulated to increase them; but let him also be instructed in the spirit of the gospel.

Take an illustration of my meaning from a letter, addressed by a missionary in Bengal, to some children in this country. "Pray," says he, "for the poor Hindoo children. O could you see the little creatures placing their lighted lamps at the water side, in honor of their imaginary gods!—could you see them making idols of mud, and offering to them, at the river side; above all, could you see their dead bodies floating down the river, or torn by the frightful birds of prey, and mangled by dogs and jackalls, you would pray for them, you would pity them; nay more, give your cents and your silver for their instruction. Let me know what you will *give*, and *then I shall know how much you love Jesus.*"

That these facts are stated with the purest motives, and that they ought to awaken emotions of pity in every bosom, cannot be questioned. But what *is* pity towards objects of wretchedness? Is it the same as love to Jesus? In itself, it is an *instinct*, found in every man, good or bad, who is not a monster. It is found in many animals towards the suffering of their own species. And shall the exercise of this *instinct* be identified with holy love? Shall such senti-

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ments be uttered by Christian missionaries, and be repeated with approbation in the periodical publications of a Christian country? "Let me know what you will *give*, and *then I shall know how much you love Jesus.*" Would Jesus himself have said this?

There is another source of mistake. A man whose heart is a stranger to the power of religion, perhaps commiserates the heathen. I ask him to lend assistance in sending them the gospel. In complying with this request, he indulges the secret persuasion, that it would be enough to raise those heathen to a state as good as his own; while in truth he may be tenfold more guilty than any heathen on the globe. But if I am called to preach on the subject of missions, in the hearing of this man, and if I press on his conscience the aggravated guilt of those who live without personal holiness, under the light of the gospel, and lead him to draw such a comparison as the truth demands, between his own moral condition, and that of an unsanctified heathen, I may offend his pride, and frustsate the end of my solicitation. What then? That I may gain a dollar to the treasury of Christ, shall I hide the truth of Christ, and become accessory to the delusion that may ruin a soul?*

Having suggested some of the dangers connected

* I do not say that whenever we ask the aid of an individual to any religious charity, it is indispensable to instruct him in the principles of the gospel. Religion pays due respect to proprieties of time and circumstances, and fidelity needs the guidance of dis-

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with our systems of benevolent efforts, as they respect men without piety ; let us consider these dangers,

II. As they respect real Christians, and the interests of the church. The substantial prosperity of the church is just in proportion to the measure of true piety among its members. And perhaps no maxim of Christian experience is better established than that piety acquires strength by struggling with difficulties. Accordingly it is a remarkable fact, that the most shining individual Christians, and the best devotional books have been produced in periods of persecution.

The dangers which I am to suggest under this head, all result perhaps, from this one source, the tendency there is among pious men to adapt their religion to *public sentiment.*

We ought to rejoice in that ascendancy of the church, which not only exempts it from persecution, but makes it the object of respect, even to those who love not the truth. We have seen many circumstances conspire to promote the Christian societies of the day. "Their rapid and overwhelming progress has swept along with it a vast variety of names, interests

cretion. But as this difficult task devolves chiefly on Christian preachers, it behoves us in our efforts to swell a subscription list, not merely to avoid expedients which the gospel condemns, but to take care that the dignity and sanctity of our office does not suffer, and that the gospel itself does not by our means fail of its proper influence on those whose assistance we solicit in sending it to others.

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and connexions; and has consequently given to the cause of religion, a degree of worldly respectability and magnificence, previously unknown in modern times." Here is reason for devout exultation; but here is *danger* too: danger of retrenching the grand characteristics of the gospel to accommodate the taste of the world.

Let me suppose all the subscribers to the funds of a missionary society, to be collected in one assembly. The question is fairly put, what is the *object* of this Society? To spread the gospel, is the answer. But what is the gospel? It is a system of religion which declares that man is in a state of moral ruin; that the "carnal mind is enmity against God;"—that no man can be saved except through the merits of the Redeemer, and by the sovereign, sanctifying efficacy of his grace; and that though we "should give all our goods" in public charities,—"and our bodies to be burned," without holy love, we are "nothing."

I plead for no dogmas of technical theology. Let bickerings about names and forms be buried forever. But I plead for the gospel itself. And I ask, are there not many who promote the cause of missions on the general assumption that religion is a *good thing*, is friendly to the interests of philanthropy, and civilization, and social order; who, the moment you avow your belief of the gospel, as Jesus and his apostles gave it to the world, will abandon your society, and

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stigmatize it with the charge of sectarian narrowness?

Blessed be God, that the hostility respecting minor subjects, which has so long armed the disciples of Christ against each other, and disgraced the religion they profess, is passing away; and that ages of angry speculation are succeeded at length by an age of fraternal feeling and action. Every step in the advance of genuine catholicism, I would hail as auspicious to the cause of Zion. Still we should remember that there is another extreme. Union is a delightful word. Union in a good cause, and from good principles is a good thing. But we should not give up the *gospel* for the sake of union; nor be so civil to each other, as to forget the respect that is due to our Master. Action too is valuable, only so far as it is directed by intelligence and truth. Other stimulants, independent of religious knowledge may move the church, but without promoting her beauty or strength. In the material universe, "a system of motion without light would make gloomy worlds."

A compromise, call it what we will, that rests on the basis of an indefinite charity, and that overlooks or deliberately sacrifices the grand essentials of Christianity, is a building of hay, wood, and stubble; it will not stand fire. Let the experiment be tried for a few generations, on this ground, consecrated by the faith and sufferings of our Puritan ancestors, and the

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glory of these churches would depart. Let the religious institutions, the pulpits, and the books of Christendom sink out of sight the peculiar doctrines of the cross, for a century, and what new achievement under the banner of the gospel would signalize the period? The vanquished foe would return to the charge. Every inch of territority conquered by the armies of Emmanuel must be abandoned, and paganism would roll back its tide of darkness on the world.

But your Society must have funds, and therefore it must have contributors, and therefore your doctrinal views must not be repulsive to popular taste. Is there no tendency in this to sink the tone of religious sentiment? Let the conversation of professed Christians, in their promiscuous circles, testify. Let the prevailing spirit of those charity sermons, and addresses, and reports, whose great object is to swell the list of names and sums, testify.

From the same principle, the religion of the heart and closet is in danger.

To the question which was put to our Saviour, "When the kingdom of God should come?" he answered,—"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," (that is, outward show,) "neither shall they say lo here! or lo there! for behold the kingdom of God is *within* you." The unostentatious religion of the gospel, did not please those who expected the

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reign of Messiah to be characterized by state and parade.

Now when the humble disciple of Jesus, at this day, finds the religion of his Master invested with an array of splendour, to give it acceptance with the world; is there no danger to his heart? When he finds himself associated in efforts to promote religion, with the great, and the gay, and the fashionable, many of whom would think it rudeness in him to mention, in their presence, any subject of serious piety; —is there no danger to his heart? When he recollects that his name is to be published, and that every dollar he gives, and every effort he makes, is to be proclaimed through the press;—is there no danger to his heart?*

Brethren, the taste of the times is to cry, "lo here! and lo there!" But the Christian who delights

* I would not be understood to sanction the unreasonable interpretation often given to our Saviour's precept concerning alms and other charities. Absolute secrecy is no more demanded in respect to such charities, than in respect to *prayer* and *fasting*, as any one must see, who reads the passage in its connexion. Each class of these duties must sometimes be performed *publicly*, but never with a view "to be seen of men." Ostentation is what Christ condemns. It is not wrong, in itself, to desire the approbation of good men, any more than to desire the approbation of God or of conscience. The special danger to be guarded against, in respect to acts of charity is, that here, a vain love of applause is more likely to insinuate itself than in almost any other duty. Yet while we watch against this tendency, with all due vigilance, we must not be so cautious lest our left hand should know what is done by our right, that nothing shall be done by either.

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only in the bustle and whirl of public engagements, and neglects his communion with God in secret, "wrongs his own soul." The plant of piety cannot be permanently fair, flourishing, and fruitful, unless its root is watered in the retirement of the closet. And even here too, the habit of undue respect for public opinion, may have become so inwrought into our feelings, as to follow us with its baneful influence, into the little sanctuary, which ought to be free from intrusions of the world. A journal of religious experiences, kept by some humble saint, solely for his own spiritual improvement, has often been published with great utility to others. But when such a journal of *private exercises* is written with a *view* to *public inspection*, when the eye looks out from the closet window at the great world, while the pen describes the secret movings of the heart, this circumstance may greatly tend to modify the description, if not the exercises themselves. In such a case I fear the record of the closet will not always correspond with the record of omniscience.*

* These remarks may appear to some invidious. But the eager interest with which a few excellent things of this sort have been read, doubtless has influenced many individuals to think that they could in no way benefit the world so much as in preparing similar accounts of their own "devout exercises." To my feelings however, there is something not a little repulsive in a diary, which professes to delineate the *secret* workings of the heart, but is obviously designed for the *public* eye. And in respect to the value of such compositions, feeble and tedious as they often are, it is not strange

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Another danger to which the public cast of our religion exposes us, is that of identifying the cause of Christianity with ourselves.

It results from the constitution of our minds that action is enjoyment. This intrinsic enjoyment of action, the Christian may mistake for pious feeling. There is special danger that he will thus mistake, when the object which awakens his efforts is *religion;* and when it is a *great* religious object. In such a case, it is of course, a *public* object, in which numbers are engaged; and his excitement is heightened by social sympathies. This object in its progress, perhaps associates him with respectable men, and presents him advantageously to his own view, and the view of others. Perhaps some prominent and responsible service is allotted to him, which puts in requisition his energy, and enterprise, and influence over his fellow men. Certainly, the ardor of his heart may rise with these circumstances, on purely *benevolent* principles. But it may rise too, on *other* principles. The secret spring of his zeal may be, that the prosperity of this good cause, is honorable to his own efforts. The elevation of this good object, makes *himself* conspicuous.

Nay, brethren, shall we blush on this occasion to acknowledge the whole truth? In organizing our charitable societies, male and female, in what instance

that the estimate of those who are tasked with the perusal, should differ widely from that of the writers.

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does not the suggestion intrude itself upon us, that the multiplication of *offices*, is indispensable to success? Certainly there is nothing in the gospel at variance with the innocent courtesies of life. So far as this expedient is adopted with a view to draw the attention of an individual to a good object, by attaching to him some personal agency in its promotion, there is nothing in it inconsistent with the simplicity and dignity of Christian principles. But how often is this measure, with others like it, nothing more in fact, and designed to be nothing more, than an undisguised appeal to the vanity of the individual concerned. Yes, in this boasted nineteenth century, this age of overflowing benevolence,—this dawn of the millennium, Christians must be flattered by votes of thanks, by a cautious respect to their pride and their opinions, and must be complimented with *offices*, to secure their cooperation in the cause of their Redeemer. O Jesus, Master! give us thy spirit; that we may be worthy to be called thy disciples.

In connexion with this last topic, the disposition to identify *ourselves* with the great objects of benevolence, it is time for Christians to perceive, that in the same way, these objects themselves are exposed to dangers, of very serious aspect.

From this source results the tendency of individuals to exalt in their regard, one part of a grand system, at the expense of other parts. Our conceptions

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and our capacities of action, I know are limited by the very laws of our being. Nothing short of an infinite mind can embrace the interests of this moral universe that surrounds us. But though we must act in a contracted sphere, we are not obliged to act on narrow and selfish *principles*. We are not obliged to estimate the absolute or comparative importance of a charitable society, by the relation *we* have sustained to it, and the services *we* have rendered in its behalf. The very fact that it is *our* society, may disqualify us to judge impartially in the case. Hence the coldness, shall I say hostility, (if so incongruous a term can be admitted here,) with which some good men regard important societies, in the management of whose concerns they have no individual agency. Hence their alternations of zeal and indifference towards the same object, at different times. Hence one becomes an exclusive advocate for this charity, and another for that. One perhaps would have all religious efforts concentrated in promoting missions to the heathen. Another prefers the same claims for domestic missions. Another, for Education societies ;—another for Bible societies.

Hence also, good men contract *localities* of feeling. The interest of their neighborhood, of their party, of their College, of their periodical publication, (or whatever happens to be the favorite object,) because it is *theirs*, is magnified into preeminent importance.

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Hence minor and temporary objects of benevolence, that concern only one village, or family, or individual, are exalted into a competition with the paramount interests of the church. Hence public attention is distracted; and the little streams of charity, which ought to fall into a common current, and swell the tide of that mighty river, which is to make glad the city of God, become so many counter-currents, crossing each other's course in every direction.*

Now, they who are Christians indeed, must rise above all this littleness, to more adequate views of what their religion requires. Their eyes must be opened with a broader vision, and their hearts swelled

* The repeated journeys, which the author has been called to make, on account of his health, have given him opportunity to observe extensively, the influence of multiplied applications for charity, towards small and distant objects. A few persons, for example, undertake to erect or repair a church, or to establish an academy. They possess no means of their own, but entertain no doubt that, in this period of liberality, sufficient aid can be obtained from the public. An agent is despatched to distant parts of the country, who presses his solicitation on strangers, perhaps with an untiring pertinacity, proportioned to his own want of intelligence, and delicacy of feeling. Now, if he succeeds to collect more than enough to defray the charges of his journey, it is done at the expense of confounding great with small objects of charity, or of alienating many minds from all such objects. The general principle applicable to such cases, doubtless is, that good objects of a *local* nature should seek help chiefly from their own region; for the same reason that a necessitous individual should ask alms where he is known. And it is equally obvious that the resources of distant regions, should be promptly thrown into one common charity, in behalf of objects equally the concern of all:—objects that have no "local habitation," but the hearts of Christians.

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with more expansive benevolence. Though they occupy different apartments in the household of God, they are brethren of one family. They have a great, common interest,—a great, common work to perform. Away with rivalries and collisions. God speed to the man who labors for Christ. Let him forget himself, and sink his personal and local attachments in love to his Redeemer; and I say God speed to that man, whoever he is. Let his own conscience decide where and how he shall labor.

What conclusions then shall we draw from the admonitions of this subject? Because our labors of benevolence are attended with difficulties, shall we fold our hands, and relapse into that slumber which has so long been the reproach of the church? Shall we abandon our charitable societies, and our enterprises of benevolence, because they are connected with dangers? As well might we give up our food, because we are warned against intemperance; or our breath, to avoid the poisonous exhalations of the air. As well might we give up the sabbath, and the Bible, because they are liable to abuse:—and the church itself, because its glory is tarnished by the imperfection of its members. No, brethren;—the work of this age is but just commenced. Christians of former days have slept supinely, and the long arrears of their neglected labors, fall upon our hands. *We* have slept too, and at this moment, notwithstanding the eulogies

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we bestow on our own zeal, compared with the slumbers of the past, we are but half awake. The day is far spent;—the mighty task of evangelizing the world is before us, and yet we have but just begun to open our eyes.

Surely this is not the time to talk of remitting our efforts. No,—they must be increased a hundred fold. New enterprises must be undertaken, new societies formed, new sources of revenue for the church devised. Every heart must beat with a higher impulse, every arm be braced with increased strength. And these measures must be public. The world must be called in to aid them. And there must be anniversaries, and addresses, and subscriptions. The names of the benevolent, and their good deeds must be made known, as examples to others. Christians *must* encounter all the dangers of leading on these public movements; but Christians must *take care of their hearts.* To act well their part in this day, they must have grace enough to mingle with the world, and yet not be carried down with the current of the world; grace enough to meet applause or reproach, and be *Christians still.* They must have a fervor of zeal, not to be chilled by coming in contact with the frost of apathy; a firmness of faith, not to be staggered by the shock of opposition.

Ministers, especially, should be instructed by the signs of the times. We who are entrusted with the

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ark of God, during the journeyings and perils of the church, are responsible for the sacred deposit. Let us not be ashamed of our religion; nor conceal, nor mutilate it, from complaisance to the world. We may preach a gospel of our own which will please men. But if we preach the old-fashioned Christianity, which Jesus preached, and as *plainly* as he did, depend upon it, the unsanctified heart will rise in opposition. And yet, (though it is a standing paradox to unbelief,) this is the very preaching that is to be the instrument of enlisting the world under the banner of the cross. In all our intercourse with men, let us remember that our Master was crucified for the cause of truth; that the ministry which disguises his truth, he will not bless; and that they who shun the labors and trials of his service here, will lose its honors and rewards in heaven.

Finally brethren, on this day of humiliation, while we mourn over our sins, and the sins of our fellow Christians, which mar the beauty, and retard the triumphs of the church; it is a precious consolation that we may commit all these interests to God, in whose hands they are safe. He can, and he will take care of this cause, in spite of our imperfection. The same Bible that warns us of our dangers, encourages our hopes. Yes, the church will survive these struggles and conflicts. The day is approaching when mountains will become plains before the chariot of our

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Redeemer; the battle will cease to rage, and the trump of victory will proclaim; "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ." Fly swiftly, the intervening years. Break, illustrious morning, on the world. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!".....AMEN.

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10.

DUTY AND DEPENDENCE OF SINNERS.

A

SERMON,

BY SETH CHAPIN, A. M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN HANOVER, MASSACHUSETTS.

Incline your ear and come unto me. Hear and your soul shall live..... *Isaiah.*

BOSTON:
SAMUEL T. ARMSTRONG, No. 50, CORNHILL.

U. Crocker, Printer.
1819.

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THE only argument, by which my friends have prevailed on me to reluctantly give this Sermon to the Public, is, that "something on this subject is wanted in the hands of common readers, especially in times of revivals." Although entitled to no distinguished merit, it may be made a blessing to some.

THE AUTHOR.

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SERMON.

JOHN vi, 44.

No man can come to me; except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him.

PLAIN, faithful preachers of the Gospel are often accused of being very inconsistent with themselves. Nothing is more common, than for people to retire from the house of GOD with bitter murmurings and sore complaints. 'Our Minister, to-day, has plainly contradicted himself. In one part of the day, he invited and urged us to repent of our sins and embrace Christ. He told us, it is our *duty* to repent. Yet, in the other part of the day, he informed us, we are *unable* to repent. In short, one moment he tells us, *that we can*, and the next, *that we can't*. Such are strange doctrines;—who can hear them?'

But stop! Let such objectors carefully examine the matter, lest they be found to accuse not only man, but God Himself. Your Minister may be able to present before him a shield, whose inscription is, "THUS SAITH THE LORD," and

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which will effectually ward off every shaft of accusation, that is aimed at *him*.

Some preachers, undoubtedly, err; and, in illustrating the *Duty* and *Dependence* of sinners, one of the most important subjects in theology, leave some things at loose ends. While the subject is all important, an illustration, perhaps, is attended with no small difficulty. After the most elaborate investigation, we are obliged, and ought to be willing, to leave this, like many other doctrines, involved, in some degree, in mystery. Whatever view of the subject we take, when we arrive at a certain point, difficulties arise insurmountable to a common mind. We, worms of the dust, cannot expect the adorable Majesty of Heaven and earth, Infinite Wisdom Himself, to descend, in His government, in every particular, to our very limited understandings. He, who made and who rules the material and immaterial worlds, has not condescended to limit His counsels to the contracted scale of our capacity.

On this, as on other difficult subjects, preachers of the Gospel, through a misuse of language, may sometimes make an apparent, and, possibly, a real contradiction. But, in general such objections as we have named, may be, with equal propriety, and, indeed virtually, are, levelled against the preaching of Him, who spake as never man spake.

Let us make an humble attempt to obtain a plain Scriptural view of this subject. In our text, Christ says; "No man CAN come to me, except the Father DRAW him."

My Friends, is there any ambiguity in this text? Is it not perfectly plain? Dare we attempt, as some do, to explain away the literal sense of it, and thus wrest the Scriptures to our own destruction? What other than a literal sense can we affix to it? It would be a most unwarrantable use of language, to make these words of our Savior mean any thing else, than *that there is something, which will forever hinder sinners from coming to Him, from embracing the Gospel, unless they are DRAWN by the Almighty power of God.*

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Let us see if this construction is not secured by many other passages of Scripture. In the sixty-fifth verse of this chapter, our Saviour says; "No man *can* come to Me, except it were *given* him of My Father." *Given*, here refers to those, who were given to Christ in the covenant of redemption, as is evinced in the thirty-ninth verse.—"And this is the Father's will, which hath sent Me, that of all which he *hath given* Me, I should lose nothing; but should raise it up again at the last day." To the same purport, in the seventeenth chapter, in His prayer to His Father, He says; "Thou hast given Him [thy Son] power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou *hast given* Him." Hence, those who come to Christ, are vessels of mercy, chosen by the Father. Again, in the eighth chapter Christ says to the unbelieving Jews; "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even, because ye *cannot* hear my word." The meaning is, they were so hardened and blinded in sin, that they *could not* be subjects of a saving knowledge of His salvation. Also in the twelfth chapter, it is said by the evangelist; "But, though He had done so many miracles before them; yet they believed not on Him;—that the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled, which he spake; 'Lord who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?' Therefore they *could not* believe, because Esaias again said; 'He hath *blinded their eyes* and *hardened their heart*, that they *could not* see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them." Here, again, the Jews are represented as so blinded and hardened that they *could not* exercise a saving belief in Christ. In the twelfth chapter of Matthew, Christ says to the Pharisees; "How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?" This is in that interrogative form which implies a strong negation. Ye *cannot* speak good things.

By the apostle Paul, Christ also says; "They then that are in the flesh, *cannot* please God." Also, by the mouth of

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Peter, speaking of sinners, He says; "Having eyes full of adultery they *cannot* cease from sin."

The same sentiment God uttered by the prophets. In Isaiah, He says; "They have not known me nor understood; and why? Because, God has *shut their eyes*, that they *cannot* understand." Again, He says; "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? So may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil." This, also, is in the interrogative and negative form, and is a very strong representation of the INABILITY of sinners to repent. They CAN no more repent, than the sable sons of Cushan can assume the florid beauty of fair Europeans; or the wild leopard of the Forest divest himself of the spots that nature gave him. "To whom," says God by Jeremiah, "shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they *cannot* hear. Behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it."

Sinners are represented in the valley of vision, by the prophet, under the similitude of *dead bones;* which plainly teaches us, that there is a sense in which they *can* no more repent and believe, than 'a congregation of the dead' can arise and walk the streets.

But we have light sufficient on this point. Nothing is more evident, than that Christ, His apostles, and His prophets, represent sinners, as UNABLE to comply with the offers of mercy and live. No sinner CAN come to Christ, except the Father DRAW him.

Yet in numberless other passages of Scripture, sinners are *invited, urged* and *commanded* to come to Christ;—to *renounce the world;*—to *deny themselves;*—*take up their cross* and *follow* the Saviour.

By the mouths of the prophets God says to sinners; *Turn* ye from your evil ways.—*Return* ye now every one from his evil way, and *make* your ways and your doings good.—Oh Israel, *return* unto the Lord thy God.—Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and *take away* the foreskin of your

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hearts.—*Wash* thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be clean.—*Make you a new heart and a new spirit.*—*Purify* your hearts.—Let the wicked *forsake his way* and the unrighteous man his *thoughts.*—*Incline* your ear and *come* unto me. *Hear*, and your soul shall live.—*Wash* you—*Make* you clean—Put away the evil of your doings—*cease* to do evil—*learn* to do well."

Similar invitations and commands are found under the Gospel dispensation. Christ himself *invited* and *commanded* sinners to *repent* and follow Him. The text from which He began to preach was; "*Repent* for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The apostles were commissioned to go forth into all the world and *exhort* and *command* men to *repent.* Peter told the Jews on the day of Pentecost, when they inquired what they should do, *to repent.* The apostles, in all their preaching, called on sinners to *repent* and *forsake* their wickedness. James says; "*Cleanse your hands* ye sinners; and *purify your hearts* ye double minded." Paul said to the wicked Athenians; "God *commandeth* all men, every where to *repent.*"

Through the whole of the Scriptures sinners are *blamed* and *punished* for not repenting. "He, that being often reproved and hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." Christ upbraids the cities in which he had preached, because they *repented* not; and told them, it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, at the day of Judgment, than for them; because they *repented not.* He wept over Jerusalem devoted to destruction;—manifested His willingness to save the capital of His own country, if they had *repented;*—and avows their refusing to comply with His terms and *repent,* to be the procuring cause of all their woes.

All this is agreeable to the fitness of things. A child may see, that it would be palpably inconsistent for God to *invite* and *command* sinners *to do,* what they are, in no sense whatever, able to do. Especially would it appear inconsistent for

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Him to *punish* them for not doing, what they were, in no sense whatever, *able* to do. It is impossible for us to conceive in what way a creature can be to *blame*, for not doing, what he was, in every sense, *utterly unable* to do. Blame implies guilt; and guilt necessarily supposes ability.

Now, from all these Scripture testimonies and considerations, we derive the most conclusive evidence, that there is a sense, in which sinners are *able* to comply with what is required;—that there is a sense, in which they have some *ability to repent; to forsake their sins; to turn to God; to embrace Christ; and to follow Him.* The language of Christ Himself, of His prophets and His apostles, and of reason is, that SINNERS CAN REPENT.

But, in our text Christ says; "*No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me draw him.*" The same sentiment is expressed and implied, as we have already shown, in innumerable other passages.

Hence, our Saviour Himself *urges us to do*, what He plainly tells us we *cannot do. He commands us to come to Him;* and yet tells us, we *cannot come.* What will you say then? Dare you charge CHRIST with being inconsistent with *himself?* Suppress that blasphemous thought! Suppose we find in the word of God things which we cannot reconcile; let us say they are *above* the weak reason of worms, and not accuse Infinite Wisdom of saying things *contrary* to reason. Let not us, who are of yesterday and know nothing, attempt to arraign the eternal Jehovah at the bar of human reason. What God has clearly spoken let us adore and believe, however unable we may be to comprehend it. "*Thus saith the Lord,*" ought to silence every doubt and hush every rising murmur.

But, a few plain and simple considerations may throw some light on this dark subject.

That which hinders a sinner from coming to Christ, is of a *moral* nature. It is his depraved will; his unholy affections; his sinful heart; his disinclination. The sinner cer-

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tainly has natural powers of mind sufficient, under the light of the Gospel, to understand the attributes of Jehovah, and the excellency of His character, as displayed in the works of nature, providence and redemption. He has powers of mind to discern the purity of the divine law; the strictness of its requirements; the justice of its penalty, and the unreasonableness and criminality of disobedience. He has powers of mind to discover the necessity and suitableness of the atonement. He has powers of mind to discover the necessity of repentance and faith in Christ. He has powers of mind to distinguish, in some good degree, between the beauties of holiness and the odious nature of sin. He has all the natural powers of *mind*, aside from a moral disposition of *heart*, which are necessary to qualify him to refuse sin and choose holiness;—to forsake the world and follow Christ; for he, certainly, is capable in other cases, of discerning, of choosing, and of loving. He has all these natural powers of mind to love the world; and, in addition to this, he has a *disposition*, a *will* to love the world; and he does love it. Without this disposition, however, he would be able, in a certain sense, to love it. An angel has all the natural powers of mind to render him capable of loving the world; but he is at an infinite remove from loving it, because he has no *disposition*. A sinner has all the natural powers of mind to love those of his fellow men, who are his enemies, that he has to love those who are his friends; but he has no *moral ability* or *disposition of heart;* therefore he does not love them. Just so he has the same natural powers of mind to love God; and he has all the natural powers of body and mind to obey His commands and follow the examples of Christ; but he has no *moral powers*—no *disposition of heart* to love God. Hence our Saviour says to sinners; "Ye WILL not come to Me, that ye might have life." The reason is, they have no *will* or *disposition*. So, when He wept over Jerusalem, He said; "How often would I have gathered thy children, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and" (does He say, they *could* not? No) "Ye *would not*."

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Now, in view of this *moral inability*, this *want of a disposition*, it is perfectly correct to say, moral agents *cannot do* this and that; when, at the same time, they possess all the *natural* powers of acting. Such language is applicable to men, to angels, and to God. Nothing is more common than for men to say, *they can* and *they cannot*, in reference to the same thing. Let us adduce a very common instance to support this truth. A neighbour invites you to pay him a set visit. You say to him, "*I cannot come.*" At the same time you are in health; have the use of your limbs; have means of conveyance; and the road is open. In all these respects, you are *naturally able* to go. But you do not wish to go;—you have no *inclination* to visit your neighbour at this time;—you choose to spend your time in some other way; or you do not mean to be on terms of intimacy with that neighbour. In reference, therefore, to your want of a *disposition* to go, you readily say; "*I cannot come.*" Yet, at the same moment, perhaps you say to a third person; '*I can go*, if I am a *mind to;* but I don't *wish* to go.' Thus men, in their common and familiar conversation, do make a plain distinction between *natural* and *moral* ABILITY and INABILITY. They say, they *can* and they *cannot*, in reference to the same subject. The Scriptures of divine truth say no more. The language of the Holy Ghost and of the "way-faring man" is the same. There is no more contradiction in the one, than in the other. Let him who readeth understand!

In the same sense it is perfectly correct to say, angels *cannot* love the world; because they have no *disposition* for this; although they have all the *natural powers* of mind of loving it that they have of loving any other object. So it is perfectly correct, with reverence, to say, God *cannot* hate saints and punish them; because he has no *disposition* of *heart*, no *moral power* to do it; although He has every *natural power* of mind to hate them, that He has to hate sinners. Equally correct is it to say, sinners *cannot* love God and embrace Christ; because they have no *disposition of heart* to do this, although they have the same *powers of mind* to love God, that they

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have to love any other object. Hence, it is perfectly correct for our Saviour to say, sinners *cannot* come to Him, except they are *drawn* by God:—unless their hearts are changed;—unless they have given to them new *hearts;* new *dispositions;* new *wills;* new *feelings* towards God, towards their Redeemer and all holy beings. While they possess their present *hearts;* while their *affections* are diverted from God and placed supremely on the world, they *cannot* come to Christ. Just as an angel *cannot* love the world, while his affections are placed supremely on heaven and holy things. Still, because sinners possess *natural powers* of mind and body to praise and serve God;—because they are, naturally, otherwise *able* to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him in the obedience of His commands, and in the observance of His ordinances—because they have as much *natural power* to do this, as to obey their fellow men;—it is on *this* ground, that our Savior *invites* and *commands* them to come. Their having no *disposition*, no *will* to comply with the terms of the Gospel, by no means affords any excuse for their neglect of this duty; any more than the unwillingness of a child to obey his parent is an excuse for his disobedience. It is equally as reasonable and just for God to *invite* and *command* sinners to comply with the terms of the Gospel and embrace Christ, notwithstanding they have no will to comply; as it is reasonable and just, for a parent to invite and command his child to obey him, when he knows that child is obstinately opposed to obedience. The want of *inclination;* the want of a "*willing heart*," in neither case affords any excuse. On the contrary, it is this want of a "*willing heart*" that constitutes the criminality of disobedience. It is unwillingness in each case, which makes commands necessary; for the disposition of heart is the object of command.

But, it may be said, 'a parent does not know that his child will persist in disobedience, he does not know but he will obey; and when he does obey, the parent does nothing more than simply command him. But God perfectly knows, pre-

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viously to the command, that sinners will persist in disobedience; and with those, who do obey, He does something more than command;—He removes their *unwillingness* and *makes them* "*willing* in the day of His power;" so that the comparison fails.' True, the comparison does fail; and happy would it be for us, my friends, if we knew where our weak reason fails, in examining the government of God and in attempting to scan His mysterious ways. Happy would it be for us, if we had faith to believe and practice, agreeably to those truths, which, while they affect our duty, are above the comprehension of our weak reason.

Still, the manner in which God deals with us, so far as we can comprehend it, is similar to the manner in which a parent deals with his child. But there is a manner in which God deals with us, far above our comprehension; probably above the comprehension of the highest order of angels. The manner, in which God operates on the hearts of sinners, so as to bring them to repentance and into willing obedience, and that too, while sinners *work out their own salvation*, is utterly beyond our power to comprehend. "The wind bloweth where it listeth;—we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit." This truth we must believe, that the hearts of sinners are changed by the Spirit of God; and that sinners become willing to comply with the terms of salvation in no other way. But the *way* and *manner* in which this is done, we know not. In the act of repentance, God works in the heart of the sinner "*to will and to do;*" in such a manner too, that the sinner himself acts and is perfectly conscious of acting freely. Yet in what manner God does this, we know not. Could we know the particular manner of this operation of the Spirit of God, we undoubtedly should see, that God acts as consistently in commanding sinners to obey, notwithstanding they never *will*, (or in other words, never *can*,) unless he change their hearts; as a parent acts, in commanding his disobedient child; and that it is equally as reasonable, that impenitent sinners should be blamed and

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punished for not complying with the requirements of the Gospel, as that a child should be blamed and punished for not obeying his parent. When the child obeys his parent, he does it, because the nature and reasonableness of the command presents a motive sufficient to remove all unwillingness to obey, and melts his heart into obedience. But the natural unwillingness of a child to obey his parent is inconceivably small, compared with the unwillingness of impenitent sinners to love and obey God with all their hearts. Hence, although the authority of God is infinitely greater, than the authority of a parent; and his commands perfectly reasonable and accompanied with the strongest possible arguments in favor of their obedience; yet, so great is the *unwillingness* of sinners to obey; so contrary to their *depraved dispositions* is the holy service of God, that, the commands of the Eternal Jehovah, although the reasonableness of them is sufficient to strike conviction on the mind of the lowest intelligent, and although they are accompanied with the most persuasive arguments, which the three worlds can afford, do not present motives to the minds of sinners sufficient to remove their *unwillingness* to obey.

This is the reason why our Saviour says; *"No man can come to me, except the Father draw him."* He *cannot*, because he *will not*. So, because it is the *duty* of impenitent sinners to come to Christ, by repentance, and faith, and love; and because there are the most powerful reasons, why they *should* come; reasons inconceivably more weighty than those which influence a child to obey his parent; on this account, Christ *invites, urges* and *commands* them to come to Him.

Now, since it is perfectly reasonable that sinners should come to Christ, notwithstanding they have no disposition to come; it is perfectly reasonable, for Him to *invite* and *command* them, notwithstanding it is certain they *will* not come to Him, without the special influences of the Holy Ghost on their hearts. And, since Christ and His apostles plainly taught that sinners *cannot* come to Him, without the influences of the Holy Spirit, without the sovereign elective purposes of

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God; and yet *urged* them to come, implicitly telling them they are *able* to come; certainly ministers of the Gospel, who are bound under the penalty of death to "declare the whole counsel of God," ought to preach the same doctrine; carefully showing sinners, as Christ and his apostles did, that their *inability* is of a *moral* nature, which, instead of extenuating, greatly enhances the criminality of their disobedience.

Sinners ought frequently to have their *duty* and their *dependence* plainly pointed out; that they may neither cast blame on God, nor presume in their own strength. And when ministers are accused of inconsistency in thus telling sinners *'they can and they can't,'* as objectors complain; they are no more inconsistent than the Bible; no more inconsistent than God; and he, who dares accuse God of inconsistency, shall answer for it before God!

Let this view of the subject lead impenitent sinners to consider, that you are wonderfully formed to show forth the high praises of your Creator, and to glorify His great and holy name. Yet such is the exceeding depravity of your hearts, that you have no *disposition* to do, what you are in every other respect, capable of doing. Now, unless God, by the special operations of the Holy Spirit, change your hearts, subdue your proud wills, which oppose your duty; and thus, by an act of Almighty power and sovereign grace, DRAW you to Christ, you *will*, you CAN never come to Him. God is a Sovereign, and has "mercy on whom He will have mercy; and whom He will, He hardens," or leaves to persist in disobedience, against all the means of grace which sinners enjoy, and all the arguments which are placed before them, to ripen for everlasting destruction!

You *ought* to love God supremely; to obey His commands and embrace the Saviour. This you are *naturally able* to do. You have faculties to choose and love other objects. You do choose and love other objects. Every motive is used with you to persuade you to love God. God is presented to you as a Being possessing every perfection, which is calculated to secure reverence, love and respect. Christ is revealed, as

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"altogether precious." With your embracing Him is connected your everlasting happiness. While you neglect to embrace Him, you are "without God in the world" and exposed to everlasting misery.

God is under no obligation to grant you the special influences of His Spirit, to *make* you do what is already your *duty* to do. If He do this it will be an act of His *free, sovereign, elective grace.* You certainly ought to love Him without this special interposition of divine grace; but the lamentable fact is, you *will not.* Thus you plainly know your duty; but will not do it. You yourselves, therefore, render it necessary for God to interpose and make you willing, in the day of His power; or punish you for your sins "with everlasting destruction from his presence."

Pause for a moment, impenitent sinners, I entreat you most compassionately, pause one moment, and solemnly consider, how stupid you must be in sinning against Him, from whom alone comes this special grace, without which you will perish forever. How dangerous! How criminal is it for to trifle with the terms of salvation, or treat with apparent indifference, the everlasting concerns of your souls, and thus, through the hardness of your hearts, treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath! Oh! be persuaded no longer to despise the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering towards you. Cast yourselves, *immediately* cast yourselves at the feet of Him, "who has mercy on whom He will have mercy." There plead for pardon, through the blood of the Cross, and ascribe all the praise to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. AMEN.

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12.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED

DECEMBER 13, 1820,

AT THE

Ordination

OF THE

REV. JOHN M. PUTNAM,

AS PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN ASHBY,

BY JACOB IDE, A. M.
Pastor of the Second Church in Medway.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY LINCOLN & EDMANDS, NO. 53 CORNHILL.

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SERMON.

2 Timothy ii. 15.

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD.

IT must have been a source of great satisfaction to Timothy, to receive instruction relating to the duties of his office, from such a man as Paul; who, in addition to a mind naturally capacious and penetrating, was blessed with wisdom, derived from a good education, long experience in the ministry, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Great, however, as were the advantages, which Timothy received from the writings of this Apostle, they were not peculiar to him. Every minister, with the scriptures in his hand, may receive the same instruction, which the Apostle gave to Timothy. In his epistles to Timothy and Titus, with what he occasionally communicated upon this subject in his other writings, we have, it is presumed, the substance of all his instructions respecting the work of the ministry. Nor are these "scriptures of any private interpretation." The substance of what Paul has written upon the ministerial office, is as applicable to ministers, at the present day, as it was to Timothy, when he preached at Ephesus. We may, therefore, consider his exhortation in the text, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God," as addressed to every one, who enters the sacred office. As the truth, which these words contain, ought to be clearly understood,

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and the obligation which they impose, deeply felt, it is proposed on this occasion to shew,

I. What this exhortation of the Apostle implies.

II. The importance of ministers' obeying it.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God." Without any laboured criticism upon these words, we may safely assert, that they require,

1. That ministers should make it their primary object to *please God.* This is an idea, which lies upon the very face of the text. It appears to be the design of the Apostle, in these words, to specify the grand object, which ministers ought always to have in view, and to which they should direct all their exertions. This is not to please *themselves*, or to please their *hearers*, or to please *mankind in general*, but to please *God.* This is the most pure, the most noble, and the most important object, which they *can* have in view; and the only supreme object, which the scriptures *allow* them to have in view. If, "whether they eat or drink, or whatsoever they do, they are to do all to the glory of God;" if every duty, which they perform, is to be done "heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;" if "none of them are to live unto themselves, or to die unto themselves; but, if whether they live, they are to live unto the Lord, or whether they die, they are to die unto the Lord," there can be no doubt, that to please God is to be their primary object. This they should keep constantly in view, in all their studies, in all their preaching, in all their intercourse with their people, and in all their secular concerns.

They are to strive to please God, not merely as the means of securing their own happiness; (this would be nothing less than making their own pleasure the

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supreme object of their regard;) but they are to strive to please him, from a supreme regard to *his* pleasure. They are to seek to please God, because this is a duty in itself right. They are to act under the influence of that love to God, which delights in his pleasure; which delights in his pleasure as a supreme object of its regard; which would delight in his pleasure, even if no personal good were anticipated as its consequence.

The exhortation in the text implies,

2. That ministers should seriously and constantly *consider how* they may please God; "Study, *study* to show thyself approved unto God." The form of expression here used clearly intimates, that it requires much thought and care to determine always what course of conduct would be the most pleasing to God; and that ministers should constantly exercise their minds with a view to ascertain this important point. In the great work, in which they are engaged, they often find themselves in circumstances, in which it is impossible for them to know what is duty, without serious, prayerful, and persevering examination. Indeed, plain as is the path of duty, it never was designed, that any minister should know it, who will not *study* to find it out. By serious, prayerful, and persevering study, the duty of a minister, in almost any circumstances, is *easily* known; but, without this kind of examination, the instances are numerous, in which it is *impossible* for him to know it. So various and nameless are the circumstances, in which ministers are placed, that they cannot be taught their whole duty by general rules, unless the principles, on which these general rules are founded, be daily and seriously considered in reference to particular cases, that have never been specified.

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In his intercourse with his people, a minister needs, every day and every hour of the day, seriously to consider how he may please God. Among the sick, and with those in health; on occasions of joy, as well as of mourning; in the company of saints, and among the world, this should be an object of his constant solicitude. If he is not habitually on his guard, he may manifest a disposition contrary to the spirit of the gospel—he may speak unadvisedly with his lips—he may neglect important opportunities of doing good —he may thoughtlessly adopt a *course* of conduct, which is peculiarly displeasing to God, and ruinous to the souls of men.

It requires much study in a minister to know, in all their variety, what are the doctrines, which God approves; and when he has once acquired an extensive and familiar knowledge of these, great mental exertion is necessary to exhibit them in a manner the most pleasing to God, and best calculated to win souls to Christ. There is a portion of divine truth, and a manner of presenting it, exactly suited to all the variety of cases, to which a minister is to apply the word of God. There is a portion for the stupid, a portion for the awakened, a portion for the self-righteous, a portion for the humble, a portion for the disconsolate, a portion for the joyful, a portion for the aged, a portion for the young, a portion for the saint, and a portion for the sinner. Now to know the truths most suitable to be applied in these, and in all other cases—the time most proper for bringing them forward—and the manner, in which they may be exhibited to the greatest effect, requires much study. When we consider the danger there is of a minister's misunderstanding, or misapplying the holy scriptures, how peculiarly pertinent does the exhortation of

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the Apostle appear: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth!"

This exhortation of the Apostle implies not only, that ministers should seriously and constantly *consider how* they may please God; but,

3. That they should actually *do* whatever appears *necessary* to please him. The manner in which the exhortation is given, evidently implies that they are to study with a view to *act*. It is of no importance to them, to know how to please God, unless they actually use the means *necessary* for this purpose. Indeed, it is absurd to speak of its being their *object* to please him, unless they are disposed to perform the duties, which are acceptable in his sight. Knowing then as they do, that they can be accepted of him, only so far as they are holy, they must, in the first place,

1. "*Grow in grace.*" In view of the Divine character, which in their work they are so often led to contemplate, they should become more constant and more ardent in their love to God. In their studies of the human character, they should become more humble and more penitent for their own sins. Whilst they are led, by the nature of their work, frequently to view the perishing condition of a fallen world, they should become more desirous of their salvation, and more engaged in the use of all appointed means to bring them to Christ. Whilst they are led to contemplate the faithfulness of God to his promises, the glorious purposes, which he has revealed, and the perfection of that government, which he exercises over his creatures, they should the more cheerfully submit to his will, and the more readily confide in the goodness of his character.

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With a view to increase their own piety, they should diligently use the means, which God has appointed for this purpose. They should daily meditate upon their own state and character. They should frequently study the scriptures, with a particular reference to their own case. They should constantly watch against the temptations, to which they are particularly exposed; and strive against those sins, which most easily beset them. They should frequently visit their closets, not only to "pour out their hearts before God," in behalf of their people; but to seek a supply for their own spiritual wants. That they may be "examples of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity," they should not rest satisfied with ordinary attainments in religion; but endeavour to possess and exhibit it to an eminent degree.

2. To please God, ministers must faithfully improve their talents. If he has endued them with talents, calculated to render them useful in the ministry, and by his providence called them to this important work, he must view their improvement of these with a deep and lively interest. A call to the work of the ministry is a peculiarly high and holy calling; and talents adapted to the nature of a work so sacred and important are precious gifts. To hide these "in the earth," or to keep them "laid up in a napkin," is not only an insulting abuse of the benignity of Heaven; but a robbery of the Church: the very worst species of sacrilege. To qualify themselves the better for their work, and to render their exertions more pleasing to God; ministers should, therefore, use all means in their power of improving their talents. They should be frugal of their time. They should, if possible, so arrange their temporal concerns,

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as to be in a great measure, free from worldly care. So far as their health will permit, they should cheerfully endure the labour and fatigue of close application to their studies. While they keep the scriptures always open before them, as "the man of their counsel, and as the rule of their faith and practice," they should, with a view to a more thorough understanding of them, and to a more lucid and powerful exhibition of the truths which they reveal, endeavour to obtain a critical and familiar knowledge of language. In the use of means for the understanding of the scriptures, they should pay particular attention to those languages, in which they were originally written. They should read the works of those, who have enjoyed the greatest advantages for knowing the scriptures. They should attend to the customs and manners of those, with whom the sacred writers were conversant, and to whom the Scriptures were originally given. They should endeavour to acquire not only that degree of classical learning which is necessary to give them influence with men of literature; but all, which is necessary to qualify them to defend the faith against "the oppositions of science falsely so called." This improvement of their talents is obviously implied in the following direction of Paul to Timothy. "Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift which is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."

3. To please God, ministers should, so far as they have opportunity, preach the *whole truth.* They should

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lay open the original source of the gospel, show its latitude and extent, and explain its final effects upon all intelligent creatures. They should preach the gospel, not in a mutilated form, but as one entire, harmonious, and perfect system, that each part of it, when understood, may carry with it the weight and authority of the whole. The doctrines of the gospel are perfectly consistent with themselves, and with each other. They indeed involve mysteries, but no contradictions. The more they are contemplated in connection with each other, the more is their agreement and harmony seen. There is no danger, therefore, of bringing them *all* into view. It is not a *full* exhibition of the truth, that is peculiarly liable to the charge of inconsistency and self-contradiction: it is a *partial* exhibition of it. There is no way, in which the truths of the gospel can be so easily understood, as by viewing one in connection with another. Besides, every truth which God has revealed is truly valuable. He has some important purpose to answer by it, or he never would have revealed it. Accordingly we read, that "all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is *profitable*." Can any one, then, whose business it is to preach the gospel, expect to please God, unless he does, so far as he has opportunity, preach the *whole* truth? On what principle can he presume to exhibit a part, while he conceals the rest? Does he suppose, that some truths are more pleasing to God than others? If this were true, and it were proper for him to dwell only on those, which are the *most* pleasing to God, how does he know, how *can* he know, that those, which he conceals, are not of this description? Paul did not think it proper to conceal any thing, which God has revealed. When

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about to take his leave of the Elders of Ephesus, among whom he had preached the gospel, he appealed to them respecting his fidelity in the following solemn and affecting language. "I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare all the counsel of God."

If we look into the writings of Paul, we shall find, that he, as well as the other sacred writers, taught that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are one God—that all events take place agreeably to his eternal decrees—that his agency is universal—that he at first made man upright—that in consequence of Adam's transgression, all his posterity became sinners—that in their fallen state, they are entirely destitute of holiness and wholly inclined to sin—that an atonement, consisting in the vicarious suffering of Christ, is the only ground of forgiveness—that sinners are under obligation, penitently and cordially to receive Christ as their Saviour—that the depravity of their hearts is such, however, that they all refuse to do this, until they are renewed by the Holy Spirit—that the fruits of regeneration are good works—that no real child of God shall ever perish—that the soul of man survives the body and exists forever—that the bodies of all will eventually be raised from the dead—that there is to be a day of judgment, at which the righteous will be received to heaven, and the wicked sentenced to hell. In these doctrines, which Paul preached, is seen the origin, the progress, and the final consequences of the gospel. These, with others implied in them, and the various duties resulting from them, constitute "the counsel of God." That minister, who dares to assert, that these doctrines are not

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contained in the scriptures, may consistently refuse to preach them. But, to admit that they are revealed, and yet, to deny that they ought to be preached; is an inconsistency, which, it is hoped, that those, who are "set for the defence of the gospel," will be sure to avoid.

4. Ministers must not only "declare all the counsel of God;" but if they would please him, they must "rightly *divide* the word of truth." It is truth in its proper place, producing its legitimate effects, that is peculiarly pleasing to God. As the various truths of the gospel were designed to produce different practical effects, it is easy to see, that one, brought forward in the place of another, might often have many of the evil effects of falsehood. To expatiate upon the riches of Divine mercy, with those who are disposed "to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness"—to insist particularly upon the inefficacy of means, with those who habitually neglect all means—to dwell upon the certainty and dreadful nature of future punishment, in the instruction of those who are in a despairing state—to urge nothing but the necessity of human exertion, upon those who have found, by painful experience, that all means, without the agency of God, are ineffectual—to dwell exclusively upon the decrees and agency of God, with those who are perpetually pleading their dependence as an excuse for sin—to address the humble penitent, in the language of those fearful threatenings, which are made to incorrigible sinners—to comfort the awakened and distressed sinner, by applying to him the promises made exclusively to believers—is, if not perverting the scriptures, often labour worse than lost. These truths, brought forward under the circumstances

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above mentioned, are not well-timed. To promote his spiritual welfare, each of these hearers needs a different portion. If we turn our attention to the scriptures, and observe how Christ and his Apostles "divided the word of truth," we shall find, that they always considered the *state* of those, to whom they spake; and gave them a portion, the best calculated to benefit them in their peculiar circumstances. The inactive, they taught the necessity of exertion. Against the rebellious, they proclaimed the curses of the law. To the desponding penitent, they exhibited the riches of Divine mercy. To the self-righteous, they shewed the extent of the Divine commands, and the impossibility of a fallen creature's being saved, by the deeds of the law. To those, who "profess to know God, but in works deny him," they taught that "faith without works is dead." To support the hope of the trembling, and to excite his most fervent gratitude, they often brought forward the consoling truth, that all, who are in Christ, were "from the beginning chosen unto salvation." When they would show the wicked the impossibility of frustrating the designs of God—when they would inspire the righteous with confidence in his government, even in the darkest times—when they would the most effectually teach all men their absolute dependence upon him—when they would exhibit the perfections of God, in the most illustrious and striking manner—they declared his decrees, and taught the fulfilment of them by his own agency. The example of Christ, and his Apostles, in dividing the word of truth according to the condition of their hearers, is a pattern for the imitation of every minister.

5. To please God, ministers must preach the gospel with simplicity and plainness. To preach the gospel

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with simplicity, is to exhibit the truth unmixed with error. As God approves of all, which he has revealed; so he disapproves of all, which he has not revealed, when added to the gospel, and delivered in his name. "The prophet, that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he, that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat, saith the Lord?" The groundless opinions and vain speculations of men, when mixed with the truth of God, are like chaff to the wheat. As chaff mixed with wheat renders it unfit for use; so the erroneous opinions of men, mixed with the doctrines of the gospel, tend to prevent their salutary effects. Every minister should, therefore, be cautious, that he does not "teach for doctrines the commandments of men;" but endeavour to present the truth of God in its native simplicity and purity.

The simple truths of the gospel, he should declare with great plainness. It should always be an object with him, to be perfectly understood by his hearers. This object should direct him in the choice both of his style and his method. He should never speak in a style, or adopt a method, which obscures his subject, or conceals his sentiments. No truth can be of use, any farther, than it is understood. For an ambassador of Christ, sent with a message of everlasting consequence to his perishing fellow-creatures, to speak in a language, which they cannot understand, is to insult them in their wretchedness, and to degrade the office, which he fills. While such a man studiously adapts his expressions to the capacities of his hearers, he should be equally careful to arrange his thoughts in such an order, that the subject, on which he speaks, may be clearly understood, deeply impressed, and long retained.

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6. If ministers would please God, they must daily seek his blessing on their labours. They know, that Paul may plant, and Apollos water; but, that God only can give the increase. This truth they ought practically to acknowledge, by accompanying all their studies, all their preaching, all their conversation, and all their other exertions to promote the spiritual welfare of their people, with fervent prayer. The neglect of this is not only an act of disobedience to the commands of God; but such a practical declaration of their own sufficiency, as is peculiarly displeasing to him. Jealous for the honour of his name, he would have creatures to know, that in a work so glorious as that of saving souls from death, his agency is neither to be denied, nor overlooked. The Apostles were in the habit of constantly imploring the blessing of God upon all their attempts to promote the salvation of men. They did not think it sufficient merely to exhort and instruct their hearers; they were never satisfied until they had commended them to God. "We pray always for you," says Paul to the Thessalonians, "that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

Having shown, at some length, what is implied in the exhortation in the text, I proceed to show,

II. The importance of ministers' obeying it. Here let us consider,

1. That unless they "study to show themselves approved unto God," they will probably be instrumental of *destroying*, instead of *saving* the souls of their people. Although we cannot say, that God never makes the labours of unfaithful ministers instrumental of saving souls; yet, we know, that this is not his usual practice. He generally makes use of means suited to the nature

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of the object, which he intends to accomplish. The conduct of those, who do not "study to show themselves approved unto God," is not calculated to *save*, but to *destroy* their people. They do not set that example of heavenly-mindedness, devotion to God, and disinterested regard to the spiritual welfare of their people, which is necessary to exhibit the nature and importance of true religion. They do not "declare all the counsel of God." They neither assume the labour, nor exercise the self-denial, which are necessary to make them acquainted with the spiritual wants of their people; and to enable them to divide "the word of truth" so as to meet their various circumstances. They are peculiarly liable to fail as to that simplicity and plainness, which are necessary to carry the truth to the understandings and consciences of men. They are destitute of that spirit of prayer, which is necessary to influence them constantly to seek the blessing of God on their labours. Now as it is *truth*, the *simple truth*, set home upon the consciences of men, by precept and example, and accompanied with humble prayer, that God usually renders effectual to the conviction and conversion of sinners, it is to be expected, that those ministers, who do not "study to show themselves approved unto God," will leave their people to perish in ignorance and sin. It would be departing from his usual mode of operation, and contradicting the plain intimations of his word, should he honour them as instruments of "turning many to righteousness." God clearly intimated to the prophet Ezekiel, that his unfaithfulness might be the destruction of the people; "When I say unto the wicked—thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, *that* wicked man shall die in his in-

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iquity." The conduct of unfaithful ministers has as direct a tendency to destroy the souls of men, as that of the faithful has to save them.

2. Unless ministers "study to shew themselves approved unto God," there is danger of their bringing both the ministry, and the gospel into contempt. The ministry can be respected no longer than those, who fill the sacred office, appear to make it their supreme object to please God. And, generally speaking, they will really appear to do this, no longer than they are influenced by that love to God, which leads them to delight in his pleasure. As selfishiness is the principle, which governs all wicked men, even the most licentious and abandoned, when ministers make their own pleasure, instead of the approbation of God, the primary object of their regard, they degrade their office. If they do not "study to show themselves approved unto God," neither their preaching, nor their conversation, nor their general conduct, will be likely to correspond with the nature of their high and holy calling. By the inconsistency which is manifest between their profession and conduct, they will, like the priests in the days of Malachi, "cause many to stumble at the law;" and God will, after his former example, make them "contemptible and base before all the people, according as they have not kept his ways."

When the ministry is brought into contempt, by the unfaithfulness of those, who are engaged in it, the gospel, which they profess to preach, will of course be considered by many, as "a cunningly devised fable;" and all the good effects, which its influence over the minds of men is calculated to produce, will be prevented.

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3. Unless ministers "study to shew themselves approved unto God," they cannot themselves be happy. If it is not their supreme object to please God, it must be to please themselves. But to be engaged in the ministry, with such an object in view, is one of the most direct ways of destroying their own happiness. They must be conscious of acting from wrong motives; and the thought of the meanness and sordid nature of their object, in connexion with the sanctity and dignity of their office, must, at times at least, give them peculiarly humiliating and painful reflections upon the inconsistency of their own characters. They must be under strong temptation to constant dissimulation; for no man is willing to have it thought, that he is governed entirely by a regard to his own interest. Least of all, would a minister of the gospel be willing to avow this as *his* ruling motive, when all the world knows, that the glory of God, and the highest good of his people, ought to be the supreme object of his regard. Ministers, who do not "study to show themselves approved unto God," must feel themselves condemned, by the very gospel which they preach, by the voice of mankind in general, and even by the testimony of their own consciences.

Besides the unhappiness, which they are liable to suffer in this life, we must here consider that, which awaits them in the world to come. If their people perish in consequence of their unfaithfulness, they will not perish alone. When God told Ezekiel, that the wicked man, whom he should neglect to warn, should "die in his iniquity;" he immediately subjoined, "but his blood will I require at thine hand." Those, whose supreme object in the ministry, is to please themselves, are not the true servants of Christ: nor

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are they heirs of salvation. Although at the last day they will say unto him, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name!" yet we know, that he will reply, "I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

But those, who "study to show themselves approved unto God," are prepared to be happy. There is a peculiar satisfaction in the exercise of that love to God, which influences a minister to make his pleasure the supreme object of his regard; and in that benevolence to mankind, which prompts him to seek *their* good as his own. In the hope, that we are the objects of God's approbation, there is an enjoyment, with which the pleasure of receiving the praises of men bears no comparison. Ministers, whose primary object is to please God, may rationally enjoy the hope, that their labours will be blessed. They can find consolation and support, under all the trials incident to their work, and as they draw near the close of their earthly pilgrimage, they can often look back upon their ministry, and adopt the triumphant language of Paul:—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day."

The subject, which we have considered, suggests a few reflections, too important to be passed unnoticed.

1. The work of a minister is a great and arduous work. For a mere man, naturally selfish, and but partially sanctified by the Spirit of God, habitually to exercise that holiness, which shall keep all other objects in subordination to the pleasure of God, is a great thing. To know, in every instance, what

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is pleasing to God, and to do all, which is necessary to gain his approbation, requires much study, great labour, and frequent self-denial. When we consider the spirit which a minister ought always to possess, the example which he ought to exhibit, the constant watchfulness over himself and others which it is his duty to maintain, the knowledge which he has to acquire, the offensive nature of the truths which he is obliged to preach, the active duties which he has to perform, the important consequences which must follow the discharge of his official duties, and the weight of responsibility which he must daily feel, we cannot wonder at the exclamation of the apostle; "Who is sufficient for these things?" Were it not for the promise, "My grace is sufficient for thee," every minister who knows his work, would despair of accomplishing it. It is a work too great for an *angel* to perform. No wonder, that under the pressure of its duties and responsibility, the spirits of many sink, and their health declines! No wonder, that in this work, many find an early grave!

2. If ministers must make it their supreme object to please God, it is to be expected, that they will receive frequent and decided tokens of the disapprobation of men. Neither the doctrines which they are to preach, nor the duties which they are to inculcate, nor the spirit which they are to exhibit, are pleasing to the carnal heart. Although the world may respect their piety, may admire their talents, may for various reasons approve of many things in their conduct, and, on account of their ingenuity or eloquence, may listen to their discourses with pleasure; yet, they never will love the gospel, which they preach. So impressed was the apostle with this truth, that he said

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to the Galatians: "If I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Notwithstanding all the prudence which he exercised, the spirit of accommodation which he uniformly exhibited, and his general popularity as an orator, his preaching was so offensive, that he was buffetted, reviled, defamed, persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and put to death. Nor did his Divine Master, or his companions in office, receive essentially different treatment. Wherever Christ preached, multitudes were offended. They charged him with blasphemy—they accused him of preaching new doctrine—they attributed to him political views,—and endeavoured to fix upon him the odium of attempting to set up a kingdom in opposition to Cesar. They were frequently so exasperated at his preaching, that they attempted to stone him; once they led him to the "brow of a hill," with a view to "cast him down headlong," and in various other ways, they attempted to kill him. Christ told his disciples, whom he was about to send forth to preach the gospel, to "beware of men;" for, says he, "if they have persecuted me, they will persecute you." Accordingly we find, that not only Paul, but the rest of the apostles were violently persecuted, on account of the doctrines which they preached. They were often obliged to flee from city to city, to escape the rage of their persecutors. And to the places where they resorted, the reproach of their names often arrived before them; so that at their first appearance, the cry was sometimes heard: "These, that have turned the world upside down, have come hither also."

The prophets, who faithfully proclaimed the word of the Lord, generally excited the displeasure of men. Ahab said of Micaiah, the true prophet of the Lord: "I *hate* him, for he doth not prophesy good concerning

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me, but evil." Isaiah says of Israel: "This is a rebellious people, which will not hear the law of the Lord; which say to the seers, see not; and to the prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things." Jeremiah says: "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so." It is known to all, who are familiar with the scriptures, that the prophets often suffered persecution and death for their attempts to please God. Shall those, then, who are now commissioned to dispense his word, be *surprised*, "as though some strange thing had happened unto them," if, on account of their fidelity, they meet with the frowns of men? Let them rather consider, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution;" and for their consolation remember the words of Christ: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

3. It appears from this subject, that a faithful minister is a great blessing, and an unfaithful minister a great curse, to a people. A faithful minister makes it his primary object to *please God.* With this object in view, he declares "all the counsel of God," so far as he has opportunity, and endeavours "rightly to *divide* the word of truth." He preaches the gospel with great plainness and simplicity; and that the word may take effect, he accompanies it with his prayers. These attempts to "approve himself unto God," as they excite his approbation, are often instrumental of procuring the gift of his Spirit, by which sinners are converted and saints quickened, religion is made to flourish, and error and sin discountenanced and restrained. These were the

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effects of the prophet's preaching, of Christ's preaching, and of the apostle's preaching. And all, who tread in their steps, have reason to hope, that they may be instrumental of communicating in a degree the same blessings. A people, who know that their minister makes it his primary object to please God, have reason to expect, that he will be a blessing to them, and to their children after them. Although the fruit of his labours may not be immediately seen; yet the seed, which he sows, will sooner or later spring up; the prayers, which he offers, will at length be answered.

But an unfaithful minister, one who does not "study to show himself approved unto God;" who, instead of "declaring all the counsel of God," shuns to exhibit any truth, which he knows will give offence; who, instead of rightly *dividing* "the word of truth," selects those subjects only, on which he can most successfully display his genius or his learning; who, instead of preaching with that plainness, which is necessary to convey instruction to his hearers, always adopts a style and a method with a particular view to his popularity as an orator; who, instead of daily bearing his flock upon his heart before God, is habitually indifferent to their spiritual interest, is one of the heaviest curses, which God ever sends upon his people. Although under his smooth preaching, the people may dwell in quietness, and, in their stupidity, anticipate no evil; yet, the anger of God is kindling against both minister and people. Of such God says, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people, slightly, saying peace, peace, when there is no peace." "They have seduced my people, saying, peace: and there is no peace: One built up a wall, and lo, another daubed it with untempered mortar. Thus saith the Lord, I will—— break down the wall, which ye have daubed with un-

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tempered mortar——it shall fall, and ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof." These teachers, who, in other places in the scriptures, are charged with making "no distinction between the holy and profane; between the clean and unclean," destroy the souls of their people, by keeping them in ignorance of their guilt, and their danger. They are not shown their disease, and, of course, they never seek a remedy.

4. From this subject we learn, that it is a very criminal and dangerous thing to oppose faithful ministers. All of this description, as they "study to show themselves approved unto God," do in fact receive his approbation. Now is it not a criminal and a dangerous thing to oppose those, whom God approves? Faithful ministers preach the truth of God. Those, therefore, who oppose their doctrine, do not oppose *them* merely; but they oppose God himself. This Paul taught, when speaking to the Thessalonians respecting some of the divine truths, which he had preached to them. "He that despiseth, despiseth not *man*, but *God*." Christ intimated the same thing to his disciples, when he said: "He, that heareth you, heareth me; and he, that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he, that despiseth me, despiseth him, that sent me." The circumstance, that in opposing faithful ministers, we oppose God himself, renders such conduct peculiarly criminal and dangerous. The truths, which God has revealed, he will defend. Those, whom he has called to preach the gospel, he will defend, if they "study to show themselves approved unto him." He will yet defend the truth at the expense of every error. He will yet defend the characters of those, who have the fidelity to declare it, at the expense of the eternal happiness of those, who continue to persecute and oppose them.

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My dear Brother,

THIS subject, in connexion with the occasion, which has called us together, cannot but deeply interest your feelings. If, as we believe, your object in entering the ministry has been to please God, you will, in pursuing the work, "study to show yourself approved unto him." To please God must still be your object: the great object, to which all others must be made subservient. With this object in view, you must grow in grace,—improve your talents, preach the truth without equivocation or reserve—bring forward that part of Divine truth, on every occasion, which is best suited to the circumstances of those to whom you speak—in all your discourses, use that plainness of speech, which is necessary to carry the truth to the understandings and consciences of your hearers—and, remembering that God only can render your labours effectual, accompany them always with your prayers. Never forget, my brother, that you "watch for souls as one that must give account." Let the thought, that you must be instrumental of saving or destroying your people, of honouring or reproaching the gospel, of fitting yourself for heaven or hell, be with you, when you lie down and when you rise up. Notwithstanding the greatness and responsibility of your work, *be not discouraged.* Remember the consolation, which our Saviour administered the apostles, when they were about to engage in the same work: "*Lo, I am with you alway.*" No matter how great your work, if *Christ* is with you. In view of your own insufficiency, however discouraging this may appear, you may say with the apostle, "I can do all things, through Christ, which strengtheneth me." While you "study to show yourself approved unto God," you may expect frequent tokens of his favours. You will

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experience no trials, which will not ultimately work together for your good. You will have no enemies, but the enemies of God: none but those, whom he will eventually conquer; none but those, who will ultimately be made to acknowledge the rectitude of your conduct. While it is your object to please God, you are engaged in the same cause, in which Christ, and angels, and all holy beings are engaged; a cause which will certainly prevail, and in which all its friends will be forever blest.

This Church and Society will indulge me in a few words to them. We congratulate you, brethren and friends, upon your present pleasing prospects. You now behold the man of your choice about to be consecrated to the work of the ministry among you,—a man, in whose abilities and piety we have confidence; and who, we trust, will "study to show himself approved unto God." Now, in view of what is obviously implied in this duty, permit me to ask, are you willing, that he should perform it? Are you willing, that he should declare all the counsel of God? Are you willing, that he should rightly *divide* "the word of truth," and give to each of you his "portion in due season," whether it be "doctrine, or reproof, or correction, or instruction in righteousness?" Are you desirous, that he should speak to you on all occasions, with that plainness, simplicity and holy boldness, with which the apostles addressed *their* hearers? If you are, you will diligently compare what he preaches with the word of God; and object to nothing as unprofitable, which corresponds with this unerring standard. Instead of being irritated, when he shows you your sins, and with a christian temper, reproves you for them, you will be grateful for his fidelity. You will lend the influence of your example, of your precepts, and when it is necessary, of your au-

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thority, to discountenance and prohibit those practices, which he shall show to be contrary to the word of God, and dangerous to the souls of men. You will *pray* for him, that he may obtain "mercy of the Lord to be faithful."

Brethren, if the great Head of the Church has, as you hope, given you a Pastor "according to his heart," receive him with gratitude, and "esteem him very highly in love for his work's sake." You will consider his youth, and view his performances and conduct with an eye of candour. We are willing, that you should expect much. But be careful, that you look not for that in a mere man, in a *young* man too, which might be rationally expected only from an angel. Be careful of his reputation. Never listen to a charge against him, until *he* has had opportunity to meet it, and to see his accusers "face to face." Attend constantly on his ministry. By accepting your invitation to become your minister, he does not consent to preach to the bare walls of this house. His agreement to preach is not with your seats, but with you; and involves your obligation to be present, as well as his. Endeavour to profit under his ministry. While from sabbath to sabbath you hear the glad tidings of salvation from his lips, be careful, that "ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

With one word to this respected audience, I shall conclude. In the duties of a minister, as they have now been exhibited, you may learn your own. It is not those only, who fill the sacred office, that are under obligation to "study to show themselves approved unto God." To please God ought to be the supreme object of every intelligent creature. Nothing short of this

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answers the demands of the law, or the requisitions of the gospel. All are not, indeed, to seek to do this, by the same means, which ministers are required to use. But the duty itself is binding upon all. What then, my respected hearers, is the supreme object of your regard? Is it to please God, or yourselves? If the latter, you are yet "in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity;" and unless you exercise that love to God, which shall render his pleasure your delight, you can never see his face, or enjoy his presence. Let the consecration of a man to the work of the ministry, not only impress upon your minds the importance of that gospel, which he is to preach; but influence you to comply with those conditions, on which its saving benefits can be obtained. In view of this numerous assembly, in which the mutual obligations of ministers, and their people, have been considered, think a moment of that vast congregation, which, at the last day, must encircle the judgment seat of Christ; and at which, ministers must answer for the manner, in which they have preached, and the people for the manner, in which they have heard the gospel.

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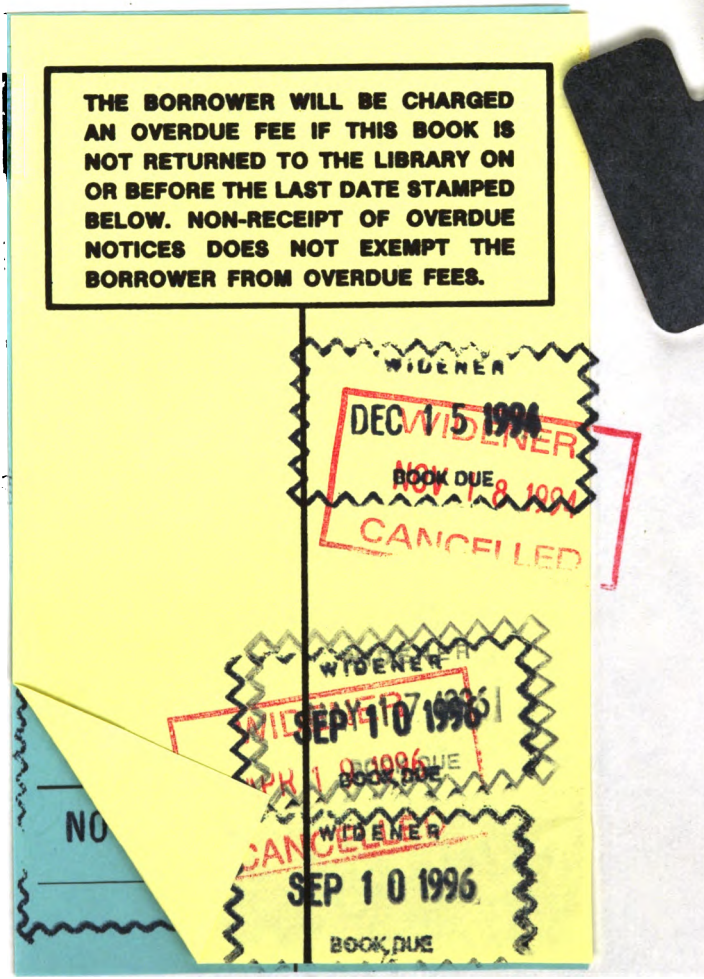
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